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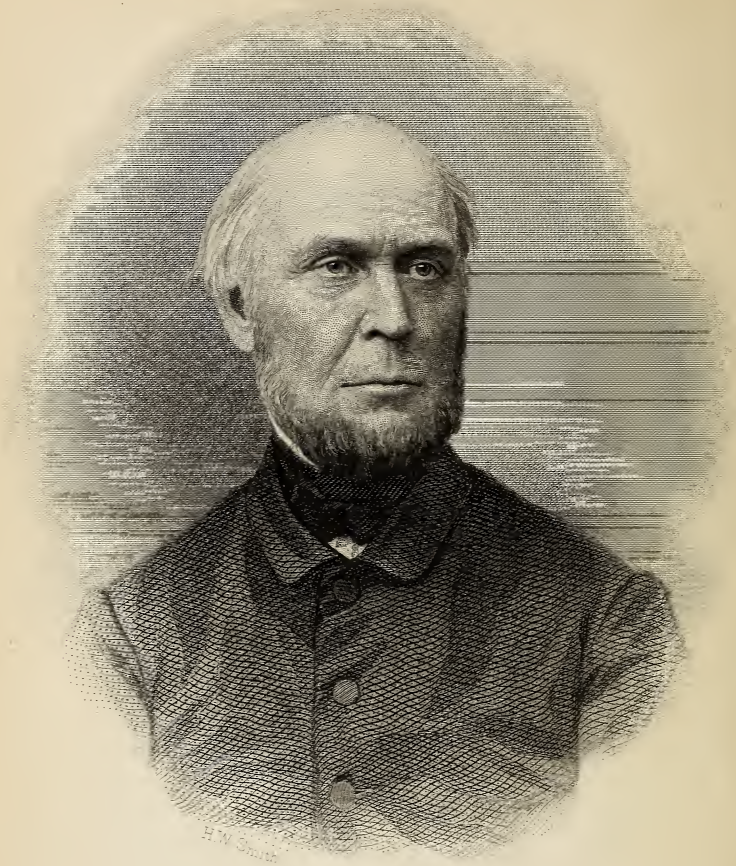


Eben F. Fisher

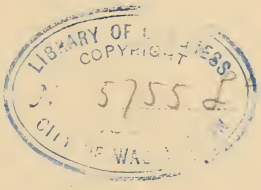
MEMOIR

OF

EBENEZER FISHER, D.D.

BY

GEORGE H. EMERSON, D.D.



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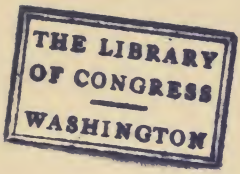

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TO

The Alumni

OF THE

CANTON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL,

PARTICULARLY THE MEMBERS THEREOF WHO ARE NOW ACTIVE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, WHO CHERISH THE MEMORY OF EBENEZER FISHER AS THEIR GREAT INSTRUCTOR, COUNSELLOR, AND FRIEND,

This Volume

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

WHEN the word came to me that the Alumni of the Canton Theological School had, by formal vote, entrusted the preparation of a biography of the late Rev. Ebenezer Fisher, D.D., to my hands, I gratefully confess that I felt honored. But I shrank from the task. In the midst of duties that press without intermission, I feared that I might not be able to gather the essential facts and present them in the form and proportions of a volume. Yet I reflected that of the living probably no one save those who have been professionally associated with him knew Dr. Fisher so intimately as myself. For thirty years we had been friends, mutually trusting and trusted. I resolved to attempt the work. The result is the book herewith submitted.

In many regards, I have found the task a difficult one. I have discovered that witnesses, even if honest and intelligent, may differ in their statements of fact; that official records are often at variance; and that different memories recall not only different but conflicting incidents. Yet I trust that no essential error of fact mars the general accuracy of this history: it is inevitable that in incidental detail an occasional error will escape detection. I have — to give two or three examples — discovered that intelligent memories are not in full accord as to the school-house which Dr. Fisher, when a boy, first entered as a scholar; as to his age when he became a convert to the Universalist faith; and as to some minor phases of the theological beliefs of his parents. But in regard to events and experiences which are vital to a proper appreciation of the boy and the man, I have found essential agreement. I believe that this book,

in its general quality and in the impression it leaves, will be found every way reliable. It has been my constant study to make it so.

I have found the toil exacting, yet I confess it has proved, in its general preparation, a pleasant, almost an enviable, task. At times I have felt very near the great and good man who for thirty years was my constant friend, — never more so than when we differed as to opinions and methods. The theme has at times cast its spell over me. It has almost seemed that he was a companion by my side, — that I could look into his noble face and hear his kind, sympathetic word. I arise from my labor of love, grateful for the quickening which must come from dwelling so continually upon the congenial theme. I give the testimony that I have grown to a more profound appreciation of his great work, and of his marvellous fitness for its responsibilities. I shall ever be grateful that his living students have by formal act pronounced my name worthy to stand beneath that of Ebenezer Fisher, on the same title-page.

In the body of the work I have indicated the parties who have been of special service to me, not alone in reporting information for my use, but in some instances in giving shape to the recital. But for their very copious and sympathetic aid, this volume could not have been prepared.

May I record the hope that the subject-matter of this book, if not its form, will secure for it sympathetic, appreciative readers ; that through the trials, anxieties, and final triumphs it records, they will be led into a deeper apprehension of the importance — the indispensable necessity — of that institutional work in the founding of which Dr. Fisher did a lion's share.

In the time of great need, providential men are raised up. Such was Martin Luther. Such was Hosea Ballou. I make no doubt that the faithful verdict of time will proclaim that such was Ebenezer Fisher.

Upon this humble tribute to his memory I humbly and reverently invoke the Divine favor. May it go forth on a mission of good to the world.

G. H. E.

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MEMOIR

OF

EBENEZER FISHER.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

The Country and the City. — The Fisher Family: from Dedham, Mass. — A Down-east "Plantation": a Wilderness. — A Speculation. — A Sequel. — "Always a Man." — A Portable School. — The Parents. —Wilderness Life. — The Bears. — First Memory. — Savage Neighbors. — The "Cat and Clay" Chimney. — The "Coal Mine." — "Going to Market." — Primitive Travel. — An Incident. — No Supper wanted. — Literary Facilities. — Geographical Mysteries. — A Quilting Bee. — A Poem. — The Scholar of the Plantation.

IT is a trite proverb with writers on the philosophy of civilization, that the city is dependent upon the country. Historical critics habitually remind us that Rome the city was constantly replenished by Rome the empire. The effeminacy, the social corruption, the moral laxity, the dearth of patriotism, and the lack of the heroic spirit incidental to the opulence, luxuries, and temptations of the great metropolis, would have wrought its destruction before a Cæsar was born, had not the rough, energetic, hardy vitality of the provinces replenished the waste, and kept intact the heart of the

"body-politic." If great men are drawn to the city, they come from the distant villages, — such is said to be the law of social and political progress.

If due allowance be made for exceptions, — which we know are not infrequent, — it is evident, and the fact is easily accounted for, that the rule is here correctly enunciated. The average man is weak in the presence of temptation. What ought to be helps are often found to be hinderances. The men who make their mark upon their age are, as a very general rule, those who have made their opportunities and conquered difficulties.

The character I shall attempt to describe in these pages certainly furnishes no exception to the rule which I have so briefly stated. I am to sketch a career that began on the rugged Atlantic coast, in a neighborhood which at that time had no township name; when the university was a "portable school," — one moved from house to house, like its teacher "boarding around," — where the gas-light was that of the blazing back-log, and where books and periodicals were few. I doubt not that the intellectuality and integrity of that character were constitutional; but its heroism of purpose was evoked in the conflict with obstacles, which uniformly elevate the soul that rises above them or converts them into incitements and helps.

Ebenezer Fisher, the subject of this memoir, was born in Plantation Number Three, now Charlotte,

Washington County, in the State of Maine, on the sixth day of February, 1815. His father was Ebenezer Fisher, born in Francistown, New Hampshire. His mother was Sally Johnson, born in Sharon, Massachusetts. He was the second of eight children. When in later years Mr. Fisher became the pastor of the Universalist Church in what was then South Dedham, Massachusetts (since named Norwood), the fact was noted, and caused the remark in the town, that by a strange coincidence he had literally returned to the home of his fathers. The Fisher family from which Ebenezer came was a Dedham family. In a memorial sermon occasioned by Dr. Fisher's death, preached in the Norwood (South Dedham) Universalist Church, the Rev. George Hill, the pastor, said: "I am told by relatives of the Fisher family, that the grandfather of Ebenezer belonged to the Dedham Fisher family, and lived in Dedham South Parish, his house standing on the spot now covered by Deacon Hartshorn's stable, he being one of the original settlers of this portion of the old township of Dedham."

I have since verified the accuracy of this statement. Samuel Fisher, of Canton, Massachusetts, a cousin of Ebenezer Fisher, and three years his senior, gives me the genealogy of the Fishers for five generations. David Fisher, with whom all knowledge of the family begins, lived in Dedham (the south part, now, as I have said, known as Norwood). This is the only fact known in regard to him. Where he came from, at

what period he came to Dedham, or whether he was born there, and what was his history, — these are particulars in regard to which nothing has come down to us. His son, also named David, married Abigail Lewis, and with his wife went to live in Sharon, in the same State. The son of this David had the same name. Mr. Samuel Fisher, my authority and informant, adds, "The family was of the line of David." The third David married Mehetable Hewins, of Sharon, and went to Farmington, Maine, and made that place his home. Ebenezer, the father of the subject of this sketch, was the son of David and Mehetable. The Scripture order was unbroken. The "line of David" was kept up. A second son of David and Mehetable received the same name as that of his father. Ebenezer and David, the brothers, went to Plantation Number Three, Maine. Samuel Fisher, my informant, was this David's son, and was born on the plantation. Ebenezer, whose history I am to give, was the son of Ebenezer, as stated above. Hence, in the Scripture style, I can make the record: "Ebenezer, who was the son of Ebenezer, who was the son of David, who was the son of David, who was the son of David!" And, so far, every name is, after the manner of the early times, taken from some Scripture personage.

At the time of the removal of the two brothers, Ebenezer and David (the father and the uncle), to the plantation, the whole region was literally a "howling wilderness." The bears and other wild beasts roamed

at will. It was about six miles from sea, and no market nearer than Eastport, some fourteen miles distant. It was an uncleared forest. The land had in some way become the possession of a Boston speculator by the name of Coates. He had it surveyed off into sections of 160 acres or a half-mile square and numbered. To tempt people to make so unattractive a region their home, Mr. Coates held out "inducements." He promised to give certain squares or "plantations," as by a fearful stretch of metaphor he called them, for a sum merely nominal to parties who, in taking possession, would clear the forest, cultivate the land, and build. The soil itself was good. Potatoes and wheat would make a good yield. The offer touched the nomadic propensity always strong in New England. A farm of one hundred and sixty acres for a sum "merely nominal," was a prize not to be slighted. Mr. Coates had no difficulty in finding families eager to accept his enterprising and, as it seemed, generous offer.

But these migratory schemes too often have a sequel not anticipated. Long before the wilderness became a farm, in the midst of the slow and arduous transformation, Mr. Coates failed. It was then discovered by the settlers that procrastination in taking title-deeds had been extended too far. In fact, they were held for the market price of every acre! Those who were ever able to pay were compelled to do so. The two Fishers, instead of feasting their imaginations on a home all their own, found themselves forced to the alternative of

either losing the fruits of what, by great privation and industry, they had already secured, or else accepting the hard and unanticipated conditions of paying in full for the land that had been given them. They accepted the hard lot; and, by depriving themselves even of comforts, they paid every dollar of the legal yet hardly just claim.

The lack of sentimentalism in the character of Dr. Fisher, — of which lack examples in point will appear in this narrative, — which was so noticeable to all who had his intimate acquaintance, was, I am led to infer, inherited from his father. I asked Mr. Samuel Fisher for particulars in regard to his boyhood. His reply was: "Ebenezer never was a boy. He was always a man. Ever in his plays and freaks of humor, he was sedate, thoughtful, and manly." An instance of his early manly proclivity is pertinent here.

The practice of giving boys "stints," as they were called — that is, assigning them a given amount of work for a given amount of time, all the time left after the specified work was done being theirs for their own use or play — was customary on the plantation. But this custom did not have the approval of the elder Fisher. The son had no time that was his own, and no opportunity to get any. Hence, in working in the field he had a device of his own for gaining a few minutes for his personal use. He would hurry with his hoe and get to the end of the "row" ahead of his father, and the few minutes of waiting he employed in a way that I imagine

few boys could be induced to practise. He would lie upon the ground, book in hand, refreshing his memory with what he had before studied, or else extend his reading. So absorbed would he become, that the quiet approach of his father at times failed to divert his attention. The instinct of the student was in him; in which regard, I hardly need say, the boy was father to the man.

It will be believed that the opportunities for an education were very limited. Three months in the winter was the maximum. The school-house at the first, I have said, "boarded around." It is a literal fact: the school was held in private houses, and was moved from one to another, and the proportional share of the common burden was discharged by the several families. At a somewhat later date, the rapid progress of the new civilization had a school-house proper, in which the young Ebenezer was a scholar. In going to the school, the distance was often great; and the boy found the journey a trying one. He was not a son of fortune. His clothing was scanty and thin. Later in life, he vividly remembered, with almost a return of the shivering sensation, the sufferings of those early days while on the road between his home and the school.

The son had one advantage of great moment. Both his father and mother were persons of marked intellectual gifts, and of high and firm moral principles. The mentality of the father was very marked. Evidently he was a man born to have position and influence. He

owned the mills, and employed several laborers. He was the Justice of the Peace, the plantation magistrate. He was the inn-keeper, and the inn kept and sold what in those days every inn was expected to keep and sell. He was the Post-master, his house or inn being the office. He was in fact the "grand seignior" of the Plantation, a patriarchal man; in which regard his more distinguished son "took after him" in a remarkable degree. The son, let me digress to add, with his sound moral nature and his observing mind, got his temperance principles from what he saw of the effects of strong drink upon the patrons of the inn.

I infer that in the son's early and almost passionate love of books — rather of reading, for the two loves are not identical — he has been "a mother's boy." Mrs. Fisher's passion for reading was indeed extraordinary; and this passion in her case was the expression of an intellectual force not less extraordinary. The post-office kept in her house was the special opportunity thus put in her way. It was improved to the uttermost. No open reading-matter passed out of the office — and but little passed through — till it had first gone through the alembic of her brain. Though taxed to the strength of the average woman in attending to the duties of her household, her Napoleonic ability to dispense with sleep stood her well in stead. It was no uncommon thing for this woman to sit up till the first hours of morning, poring over and drinking in the contents of papers and pamphlets. If the subject-matter was very inter-

esting and voluminous, the hour of three in the morning not unfrequently found her hard at the task of mastering their contents. Few heads, and still fewer bodies, are equal to such a strain; but Mrs. Fisher found in the task refreshment not less than knowledge. That she was an ardent debater, tenacious of her opinions, and withal an enthusiast in politics, the reader will not be surprised to learn. Had woman suffrage been a question in her day and community, she would have been not only in its favor, but its earnest champion and leader for all the region round. But the politics of her day, though dealing with such dry topics as banks and tariffs, were full of interest to her; and she was ready to debate them, and maintain a party opinion in regard to them, with any person, man or woman, who put the challenge in her way. And she was not easily crushed in argument. That strong men, with hardly an exception, have had strong mothers, has a most notable example in this tough-brained reader and debater in the post-office of Plantation Number Three.

I have said that the plantation in name, was in fact a wilderness. It was one of those very sterile regions, far removed from the large and affluent centres of civilization, that test the endurance and compel the industry and the economy of the early settlers. Most of the population, at the date of Mr. Fisher's childhood, immigrated from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, bringing with them the "district school" and the sturdy courage of the New-Englander. They could not

transform the wilderness into a garden, nor transplant academies and colleges; but they managed to secure for their children better facilities than are usually found under circumstances so unpropitious. But, at the best, they must have been poor and very limited. The Gazetteer of 1850 puts the entire population of Charlotte, which name had been given to the plantation, at about seven hundred. At the time of Mr. Fisher's boyhood, the number must have been much smaller. A few hundred persons, including children, scattered over so large a territory, can hardly be said to make a neighborhood. It was a wilderness just emerged from the primary condition. Indeed, the enemy prowling by midnight was not the burglar and the robber: it was the bear of the forest. The loaded gun was in readiness, not for wicked men, but for devouring beasts.

The bears indeed roamed almost at will over the country, preying upon the sheepfold, or whatever seemed of less strength than their own, that came within their range. The gun was always accessible, loaded and primed, not to protect the man or woman, for the bears usually quailed before the human gaze, but to protect the piggery, the hen-coop, and the sheepfold. Women at night would be gathered around the great log fire, sewing or knitting by the light of the candle, to be startled, not by the apparition but the literal appearance of a bear resting his paws upon the window-sill, placing his nose upon the glass, and most impudently gazing upon the human group within! The

women would then give the alarm. The men would run to the well-charged musket; and Bruin, foreseeing trouble, would run to the woods. But it was only by constant diligence that the live-stock of the premises were protected against the strange invader.

An incident illustrative of this border life was often related by Mr. Fisher. In his childhood, it startled him, and he retained the memory with almost a romantic vividness. One day, while standing in his father's door-yard, a strange, moaning, deathly sound saluted his ear. He was transfixed with fright. He knew what it signified, and he trembled in terror. Soon the men of the neighborhood, what few there were, started with quickened pace, and gun in hand. In due time the report of the weapon told that the crisis was passed. The men returned in triumph. A bear of sufficient size and strength had seized a heifer: the groan that filled the air was the poor creature expressing agony. But Bruin paid for his temerity with his life. Mr. Fisher used to recount this as the first event he could remember.

Less annoying was the not very welcome companionship of savage men. Large bodies of Passamaquoddy Indians had their wigwams on or near the plantation. They had the most primitive manners of the tribe. They never sat at table, and never made use of knives and forks. But they were harmless and occasioned no fear. Still they were not just the kind of neighbors the average Saxon is disposed to covet.

The houses, whether of boards or of logs, I may

here add, had no accompaniment of brick. The chimney was indeed laid in "courses," but the courses were sticks filled with clay, very much like the cob-houses of juvenile creation, only they were cemented with the clayey soil. The technical name was the "cat and clay" chimney.

The coal-mine was the heavy forest of maple and beech. No one needed to suffer for the want of artificial heat. The pioneer woodman was glad to furnish maple and beech logs, cord-length, for "three and nine" — the modest computation being sixty-two and one-half cents — a cord, brought to the door and symmetrically piled!

I have said that Eastport was the market. It must be told how the plantation people got to the market. At the time of Ebenezer's boyhood, there was no road whatever, in any direction. It was literally an unbroken wilderness. The way to Eastport, and the method of transportation, was as follows: First, a boat, being loaded with what was to be "exported," was rowed for half a mile across what was called Round Pond. It was then guided through a narrow channel into Pennamaquon Lake, on which the boat was rowed three miles. Then the passage was down a river, two miles, to Little Falls. Here the "cargo" was taken down over the Falls. Then the boat was dragged thither and reloaded. Down about two miles more to Great Falls, the unloading, moving, and reloading were repeated. A half-mile more came to tide-water. The passage was timed so as to reach Eastport on the ebb

tide. Then, after depositing the "cargo" and loading with such "imports" as had been procured, a flood tide took them back to the river, the oars of course assisting; and then back by the same progress of loading and reloading and rowing up the stream over lake and pond. That was the style of "going to market." In the winter, when the snow was deep and crusty, there was an easy and almost a direct passage across the land, and hence winter was the elect time for going to and returning from Eastport.

Somewhat later an ox-path had been cleared for four or five miles to Pembroke, where advantage was taken of the ebb and flood tides to reach and return from Eastport. Mr. Samuel Fisher gives a curious and almost touching incident, that may appear in this connection. Himself three years older than his cousin, Ebenezer, and a brother still younger, "went to market." They took the ox-team to Pembroke, from there they took the boat and its burden to Eastport, and returned. Reaching Pembroke on the return, Samuel as the elder said to the two, "I wish to remain a short time at Pembroke. You take the team on to Charlotte; and, as the oxen will move slowly, I shall overtake you before you get home." They did as he requested. In due time he started in pursuit. Upon reaching a place about a mile from home, he saw a person stretched upon the ground. Approaching him, he discovered that the person was no other than his cousin Ebenezer sound asleep! He had become entirely exhausted; and, rest-

ing upon the ground to wait for his cousin, he fell asleep. Being awaked, a work of some difficulty, the elder, seeing that Ebenezer was weary and sad, said to him encouragingly, "It is only half a mile farther, Ebenezer, and when we get home we shall have a supper." "If I can only get home, I shall not want any supper," was the significant reply. The journey and the hard work had proved too much for a constitution that was never strong.

I may add here that the hardships of going to market were the less in that there were few occasions for such a kind of enterprise. The temptations of high life did not exist, and the wants were few. The people of the Plantation lived mostly within themselves. They raised potatoes and wheat for "home consumption," and these with the live-stock met nearly every urgent need. The abundant maple was the sugar-cane, and no one thought of buying what he could produce, sugar and molasses; and the demand for dry-goods was not very great in such a wilderness, for the people had wilderness habits.

The literary facilities of the plantation were limited. The "Eastport Sentinel" was the "London Times" of the wilderness neighborhood. This was thoroughly and officially Whig in politics, and in public disputes it was the authority and umpire. Somewhat later the other side had its organ in the "Northern Light," stoutly democratic, and also published at Eastport. A few copies of "Zion's Herald," a Boston Methodist

paper, were taken; and these three papers furnished the literary nutriment of the community.

I have alluded to Ebenezer's love of study as an example of his intellectual and studious proclivities. Mr. Samuel Fisher gives me an incident. When his mother went to the plantation, moving from Sharon, Massachusetts, she took with her that novelty of text-books, Morse's Geography. Such facilities for getting knowledge of the "round globe" and its divisions were almost an innovation upon the methods of study. It appears that Ebenezer had access to the geographical treasure, the fact coming to light in this way. Like all boys, what little of the boy that was in him loved to play with the water. He had his juvenile rafts and vessels. Samuel tells me one of his surprises was hearing Ebenezer say, while moving his toy craft around a point or along a narrow stream, that he was passing a particular cape or along a particular strait, giving the names he had learned in Morse's text-book! As the elder, he had not been admitted into the mystery of the strange book, — the straits, the channels, and capes were new to him, and he hardly knew what Ebenezer meant in his allusions to them.

As a man, the staid dignity of Mr. Fisher was easily broken into smiles, at times into rather noisy laughter. He had a quick sense of the ridiculous, and his humor never failed him. I give in this sketch of his boyhood an amusing example of his fun running to rhyme. The occasion was a quilting-bee, and the spectacle was the

not uncommon one of country neighborhoods. The particulars the poem will indicate; of course the name is fictitious. Samuel Fisher tells me that Ebenezer's verses were on every one's tongue, and that they made Charlotteville merry. And he illustrates his statement by reciting from memory as I write them down: —

My friends, come now I 'll sing to you
Of a most wondrous race
That was begun and well was run
No great way from this place.

Of lasses two, I 'd have you know,
Went to a quilting-bee,
And as they came towards their home
Our Jonah they did see.

By Jonah's wink they just did think
That he was after them;
And quickly they their heels did ply
To run away from him.

I have averred the noise was heard
For three full miles and more,
Like rabbits they did run away,
Nor look behind nor 'fore.

I say to you the dust it flew
Enough to blind your eyes,
While Jonah stands with upraised hands,
Struck dumb by his surprise.

They ran full well, as I do tell,
As far as yonder tree;
They there sat down and looked around:
No Jonah could they see.

"Alackaday!" they then did say,
"What evil have we done?
'Tis my belief poor Jonah's grief
Has surely him undone."

I conclude this account of the childhood and youth by recording the fact that Ebenezer was, by the unquestioned verdict of young and old, the scholar of the Plantation. In certain specialties one or another may have excelled him. One kept ahead of him in the arithmetic, and another in the grammar; but, in the combining of all the attainments in the general and well-balanced scholar, he had neither rival nor second.

CHAPTER II.

LED TOWARDS THE MINISTRY.

Unpromising Conditions. — The Antecedents of Faith. — Illustrative Incident. — How Blessings are Appreciated. — The Real Calvinism Dominant. — Sadness of Youthful Life. — A Furniture Maker. — Incipient Universalist. — Argues with Relatives. Urged to become a Baptist Minister. — A Pivotal Event. — Avows the Universalist Faith. — The Country Schoolmaster. — Contemplates Secular Business. — Thinks of the Ministry. — Hears his first Universalist Sermon. — Assists at a Sunday Service.

UNDER the unpromising conditions described in the preceding chapter was to appear the literal founder of an institution of learning. From the semi-wilderness was to appear the man who, in a sense distinctive and peculiar, was to be a teacher in Israel, and whose success was to be so marked that the ministry of one branch of the Christian Church at this day feels the impress of his strong mind and character more than that of any other man. In fact, the Universalist Church in America is in no small degree in the care of the ministers whose teacher in theology and the duties of the pastoral office fifty years ago was a poor boy, poorly clad and poorly taught, working with the hoe on a sterile soil, and fearing by day and night the stealthy

approach of the untamed beasts of the forest. The explanation in part is in the greed for knowledge that cared for no holiday save as it gave him an opportunity to study the book which was always at hand in his pocket, and which hastened to the end of the furrow that it might in the few moments gained review the lesson.

I pause to think of the Canton students who now make a large proportion of the working force in the Universalist ministry. I then think of that man's capacious brain, consecrated character, and plastic hand, training "the boys" in the Canton edifice. I go back — and it is but a few short years — and see that instructor and fashioner of ministers reclining upon his back in a potato field, so rapt in the tempting and inciting pages that the father, first pausing to wonder over the strange spectacle, is compelled to break the revery, and call back the wandering faculties to the stern realities of life on a wilderness farm. Fiction can present more grotesque situations, but none more romantic or farther removed from the ordinary experience of human life.

It is needless to say that the "portable" schoolhouse was but an incident in the early training of this remarkable youth. He was his own instructor. He made his very obstacles help him, forward him. He conquered untoward circumstances, and transmuted them into incitements and aids. But his ardent nature, literally hungering for an education, sought such assistance as

very limited means rendered practicable. By some method, he managed to get about four months of the training given in the Wesleyan Academy at Readfield, some ten miles distant from Augusta, the State capital. Doubtless he turned this very limited period to good account. In any view, when he left the academy his days of education under other teaching and guidance than his own were at an end. For all else, — and this is saying a great deal, — Ebenezer Fisher was literally a self-educated man.

At this stage of our history, as the boy is approaching manhood, the important question will be asked, What was the beginning of his religious belief, by the character of which his whole career was determined? And the fact is to be noted that one's character is not more determined by the specialty of his belief than by the antecedents of that belief. I was forcibly struck by the remark of a clergyman connected with one of the Brooklyn Universalist churches, that the denomination of Universalists will never lose in strength and zeal so long as it makes converts from the Calvinistic churches. Just after the close of the war of the Rebellion, I had occasion to travel through one of the border States, and very near a stronghold of Confederate sympathizers. In the car were several Union men from Missouri. They talked with entire freedom, and gave the most emphatic expression to their federal predilections. During the war I had lived in Massachusetts, and I naturally supposed that myself and neighbors were friends of

the Union. In that journey, I made the discovery that up to that date I had hardly got a conception of the spirit and determination which were for the Union "in dead earnest." These patriots who at the time were my fellow-travellers had suffered for their political faith. They had been victims of espionage, of social ostracism, of bitter prejudice. They had taken a position which was not alone unpopular, but which was also full of danger. In declaring themselves against the policy of the seceders, and in allying themselves with the party of the Union, they had in fact taken their lives in their hands, and of nearly all men in their old neighborhood they were hated. They had put all that was dear to the hazard. In literal fact, their faith had "cost them something." I soon found that my ardent patriotism was lukewarm, hardly deserving the name of zeal for my country. I felt humbled in their presence. I felt for them a reverence such as the story of the Covenanters had evoked, as I read the noble history in my youth. I was made to understand that a man could not be a Union man in Massachusetts in any such sense as there were Union men in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri.

There is no danger that we shall state too thoroughly the dependence which an appreciation of good has upon a previous denial of it. That only the emancipated slave can have a just estimate of liberty; that only they who have suffered on the bed of disease and pain can rightly value the preciousness of health and strength;

that only they who have felt the pinch of want and the pangs of hunger unallayed can know the meaning of the father's home where there is enough and to spare, — are axiomatic truths, and we cannot hold them too strongly.

When Ebenezer Fisher was a boy, Calvinism was in the ascendant. The distinction which we are in these later days compelled to make between the Old and the New Orthodoxy had not been made nor foreseen. Endless punishment for all who did not repent of their sins and attain a new heart before the breath left their bodies meant, not endless consequences, but endless penalty absolutely inflicted. The pains of hell were not metaphorical words. They were enunciated with strict literalness. The theory was that on and after the date of bodily death God hated the sinner, and Jesus the Friend, became Christ the vengeful Judge. And this frightful theology was not debatable. It was taught as a fact. Even to criticise the terms of the teaching was deemed wicked. To doubt the truth of hell torments was not simply a mistake of judgment, an error of belief: it was a damnable sin. And people *did* believe in this awful creed. They held it not as a habit of acquiescence; but in their souls they accepted it, felt it, suffered from it. When, therefore, a man or woman, by study of the Scriptures and by the prayerful exercise of reason, was led at first to doubt the doctrine, next to cast it off, and then to apprehend and accept the gospel of glad tidings of great joy for all people, there was

experienced a literal emancipation of mind and soul. The new truth, in the fulness of the joy it imparted, almost crowded out all minor thoughts. The new belief brought ecstasy of joy, and the convert felt that woe was his if he did not proclaim to others the faith which had brought the exceeding peace to himself. The Universalist, who had been a believer in the Calvinistic creed, felt that he had passed from darkness to light; and as he mused the fire burned, — his heart overflowed in grateful zeal.

In this I have described the experience of many of the Universalists of half a century ago. In essence, it is the history of the Ballous, of Walter Balfour, of Sebastian Streeter, of Thomas Whittemore. I name only those who have departed. I have described the experience of Ebenezer Fisher.

The elder Fisher was nominally a Universalist.[1] But he was not demonstrative in opposing or accepting religious beliefs. But the mother was a Baptist, and of course Calvinistic in every fibre of her thought. Other members of the family took the mother's creed, and in some instances were even more devoted to the Baptist thought and profession. The atmosphere of the home was therefore thoroughly and at times actively Calvinistic. The boy Ebenezer, thoroughly religious in his spirit, sedate and serious far beyond his years, instinctively a believer, sincere in every thought and

[1] One statement assures me that he was a Unitarian. In either character he was not demonstrative.

word, took the gloomy theology to his mind and his heart. Though not accustomed to talk much on the subject, he thought and felt. The belief cast a shadow over his early life. As he not only believed in the terrible doom of sinners, but also realized it, it made his early days bitter. As no one appeared to dispute its truth, it hardly occurred to him that its truth could be called in question. He brooded over the awful plight of man. He saw no escape from the grasp of inexorable wrath. It was his awful vision by night, the shadow that accompanied him at noonday. He could not call his mind off the horrible spectre. Like the great Saurin, whose logical and consistent words are so often quoted, he found "life a cruel bitter."

The Rev. J. N. Emery, of Beverly, Mass., — formerly a student at Canton under Dr. Fisher, — communicates to me an incident, which has a fitting place in this connection. "Once," Mr. Emery writes, "in a discussion of the authority of the Bible in the class, he made the statement that he would believe any doctrine which he felt *sure* the New Testament taught. A student asked him if he would still hold to the authority of the Bible, if he should be convinced that it taught the doctrine of endless misery. His reply was, 'Yes, I did accept it as authority when I believed it taught the doctrine of endless misery. I have no reason to think it would be different now.' I have heard him remark in Conference meetings, that he used to go out into the fields alone, and give vent to

his indignation that God had decreed the damnation of souls."

Such was the first belief, the first theology of the first Theological school, for educating young men for the Universalist ministry in America!

At the age of sixteen,[1] young Fisher met with one of those opportunities, little thought of at the time, but which the future proves to have been the pivotal event of life. The Fisher family was, as I have related, from Massachusetts. They were scattered over Norfolk County; particularly in Canton, Sharon, and Dedham. It was not unnatural for the son to be drawn to the home of his kindred. Accordingly, at the age of opening manhood, Ebenezer went to Sharon, where, for a short time, he worked in a furniture establishment, with Horace C. Clapp, his brother-in-law. This was just before his four months of attending school at Readville. His sister, Mrs. Clapp, a very sincere and Christian woman, retained the doctrinal opinions of the mother, though her zeal as a Baptist was even more intense. In Sharon, he was also much in the society of his aunts, all of them members of the strictest of Calvinistic sects, the Baptist. Young Fisher had, at that time, but recently lost faith in the creed of his youth, and was in the incipient stage of Universalism. He, however, venerated his older relatives, whose deep interest in his "eternal welfare" was natural. I am told that they argued with him, and sought to instil in him

[1] Mr. Samuel Fisher is confident that the date is later,

the doctrines of their creed. This does not imply that he was as yet of a contrary belief; for he was by nature argumentative, and even in talk with those whose opinions he shared he would often put them on the defence. I recall an instance in which I was a party. The second time I met with him, I gave expression to an opinion on a minor point of doctrine which I had recently reached. He began at once to name objections. I attempted to remove them, and he would at once discuss some point in my reply. The dialogue ran on perhaps half an hour, when, with the confidence of my opinion, I said to him: "I believe you will have to come to my side of the subject yet!" To my surprise he answered: "Oh, I think just as you do, now; only, as that side is sometimes based upon propositions which are not pertinent, I wanted to see if you could give the right argument!" In later days, when I knew him better, I uniformly found him as much in earnest in opposing false proofs of what he nevertheless deemed truth, as in defending the truth itself. He appeared to think that the defending of sound doctrine by such "arguments" as were not adequate worked to the prejudice of that truth. He was therefore quite as combative of false methods as of false conclusions. And he constantly had a combative proclivity. The circumstance, therefore, that he had controversies with his aunts does not of itself imply that he differed from them in doctrine. But, in fact, he had come to doubt the creed, which to his sincere and serious na-

ture had lost its power over him; yet his relatives seriously urged him to become a Baptist minister, and offered to bear the full expense of the regular course, at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Newton, Massachusetts, a burden which they were abundantly able to bear. This offer he, of course, felt moved to decline.

The young man had simply reached a stage when his future might be determined by influences in themselves slight. In this state of negation, with perhaps some glimmerings of Universalist thought, but not enough to lead into any very positive belief, the determining opportunity of his life came, and he firmly announced, what in the succeeding years of his life he unhesitatingly defended, his faith in the grace of God which is to secure the final salvation from sin of every soul.

The name of Samuel Chandler, of Canton, must here receive conspicuous mention. He it was that put young Fisher in the way of becoming a pronounced Universalist. Mr. Chandler and his sister happened to make the acquaintance of the young man, who was at work in the furniture establishment of the adjoining town. They had discovered his new tendency in the direction of the Universalist doctrine. They had a Universalist "library," including some twenty numbers of Mr. Whittemore's "Trumpet," and Ballou's "Notes on the Parables." These they loaned the young furniture maker. And oh, what food these proved to that hungry and waiting soul! What a soul-rejoicing hope they enkindled! And with greed did the newly evoked

spiritual hunger ask for yet further supply. The Chandlers then put in his hands those books, which it has always seemed to me no person can read and ever after believe that the doctrine of endless hell torments is really taught in the Scriptures usually cited in their support, — Balfour's "First and Second Inquiries." They were read and studied, and full conviction was given to the mind and heart of the young reader. Ebenezer Fisher returned to his half-wilderness home, a confirmed, and, as he ever after proved, a consistent Christian Universalist.

Returning to his home, he at once put his attainments, necessarily limited, to the practical use which in remote villages is so common, that of teaching. He got employment in the vicinity of his home, and, for certain months of the year, Ebenezer Fisher was the country school-master. Of his success in that character, I should be safe in giving an opinion even as a conjecture. His extraordinary faculty for criticism — so conspicuously exhibited later in life — must have been effective in the crude years of his practice in the school-room. But the circumstance that he was regularly in that office for several years shows the estimate formed of him by his own community. In this particular, the prophet was not without honor even in his own country. He was a school-teacher from the age of nineteen to that of twenty-three.

As manhood came the natural question was the ever-anxious one, "What shall I do?" At first he thought

of secular business. There is something almost grotesque in the reflection that the dignified and reverend head of the Theological School escaped the enterprise which he seriously contemplated, — that of going into the oatmeal business! But Providence had another work more congenial to his tastes, and more fitting his extraordinary gifts.

Just when the thought of entering the Christian ministry entered his mind, I do not learn: very likely he could not himself have determined the exact date. It was with him, we may presume, as it has proved with so many, at first a faint glimmer, gradually approaching a full determination. When first seriously entertained, a sense of the great responsibility, and a fear of personal unfitness for so serious a duty, usually repel and dishearten. I doubt not that nearly every worthy Christian minister has felt impelled to the solemn vocation by an inward conviction, yet meeting with frequent and painful rebuffs from the feeling of humility with which the best of men must contrast their unworthiness with the high ideal of the sacred office. Any man who enters without misgiving and with a self-satisfied alacrity the ranks of Christ's ambassadors, servants in his Church, gives the most conclusive of all proofs that he has no divine call.

Ebenezer Fisher had no unmanly distrust of himself. Like other men of strong convictions, and of great powers of mind and judgment, he knew his strength. In contrasting himself with others less favored of na-

ture, he could but feel and recognize his superiority. No man becomes a leader among his brethren who does not recognize his ability to lead. Mr. Fisher was a strong man, and he knew his strength. He was a leader among men, and he knew that he was able to lead. He was never kept back or down by a crushing distrust of himself. I clearly, and in unequivocal terms, state this marked characteristic of the man. I deem the fact a tribute, and I respect him therefor. Yet was he a man of due and chastened humility. The first thought of entering the sacred office, I have no doubt, led him to shrink in distrust and fear. But, by the time he was twenty-one, his mind was made up, and then his thoughts concentrated on the means by which he might fit himself for the great responsibility. He was divinely called, and he obeyed. At this juncture, fortune favored him, as I shall presently explain.

As the influences which led into the Universalist ministry this man, who was destined to achieve for the Universalist Church so great and desirable a work, have a deep interest, I am fortunate in being able to give a pertinent incident, which came to light almost by accident. At the Memorial Service of Dr. Fisher, held in Boston a few days after his decease, the Rev. Richard Eddy gave a biographical sketch. The announcement that he was to render this service fortunately took the eye of one who had personal knowledge of what was probably Mr. Fisher's first appearance in public, specially as a Universalist.

The late Rev. E. W. Coffin was spending a few Sundays in Calais, Maine, in the fall of 1839. It came to the knowledge of young Fisher that a Universalist minister was preaching in that place. The distance from his home to Calais was fifteen miles, yet the almost providential opportunity was not to be neglected. He went and heard a sermon from Mr. Coffin. He felt constrained, so deeply had his inquiring mind and anxious heart been affected, to remain over another Sunday, spending the intervening time with Mr. Coffin, who, writing to Mr. Eddy the interesting particulars, says: —

"One evening Mr. Fisher said to me, 'I have no doubt of the truth of Universalism, but there are some passages of Scripture that I am unable to explain, and would like your views upon them; and for the sake of information I will take the Orthodox stand, and you the Universalist.' So we had a theological discussion; and all who are acquainted with Brother Fisher's argumentative power and ability as a debater, need not be told that I had a hard time of it!

"During these interviews, Mr. Fisher made known his desire and intention to enter the ministry, but declined my urgent solicitations that he should preach a part of the day the next Sabbath, stating that he was not prepared, and that it was his conviction that no one should preach until he had been authorized or licensed to do so. He consented, however, to take part in the evening services, and to make some remarks after the sermon, at the same time stating that he had 'never yet spoken in a religious meeting.'"

Describing the result, Mr. Coffin says: —

"When the time came, he read the first hymn and offered the prayer. I then preached a short discourse, after which

he took up the general idea of the sermon, and spoke about fifteen minutes; and, although I knew that it must have been purely extemporaneous, I could not help thinking of the figure in Proverbs, 'Apples of gold in pictures of silver,' for surely the words were 'fitly spoken.' As we walked to our stopping-place, he said to me, 'Brother Coffin, I find that I shall have to learn one thing in order to preach, and that is to be a little more prolix, or to spin out my ideas a little farther.' My reply to him was, 'Brother Fisher, as long as you are able to send out the pure gold such as you have given us to-night, you had better not trouble yourself about the alloy.' And I think that all who have heard Brother Fisher preach, or have read his writings, will agree with me that he used very few superfluous words."

There is in this brief epistle "an example in point" confirming and illustrating the comment I have ventured, that in all his mental and argumentative progress Mr. Fisher combated his way.

CHAPTER III.

ENTERS THE MINISTRY.

Elected to the Legislature. — Special Talent recognized. — Makes the Acquaintance of Revs. W. A. Drew and D. Forbes. — Their Influence. — At a Banquet. — The Subject of Ridicule. — A Brave Speech. — Compels Deference. — Salary goes for Books. — Enters the Universalist Ministry. — Preaches for his "Board." — First Settlement. — Marriage. — Family Record. — Reception in Charlotte as a Universalist Minister. — Not a "Rolling Stone." — A Reflection. — The Down-East Speculation. — General George H. Devereaux. — Makes Mr. Fisher's Acquaintance. — Recommends him to the Salem Parish. — Heard as a Candidate. — General Impression. — The Principal Objection. — "Too Old," yet Thirty-two. — Influences that determined the Parish. — Unanimously called.

THE year following, 1840, Mr. Fisher was nominated for the office of Representative in the State Legislature. In politics he was a Whig; but the Democrats were somewhat in the ascendant. This was at a time when party feeling was strong, and the temptation to vote the "straight" ticket was usually resistless. Each party put forward its strongest man. It was certain that Mr. Fisher could not be elected by the Whigs, though every member of the party was sure to vote for him. The small proportion on whom party claims rest lightly it was discovered would support the

firmly declined. Then one after another rallied him on his scruples. Doubtless under the inspiration of the cup, badgering, cajoling, ridiculing, were freely and noisily directed against him. But the young man was firm.

Yet the jeering was so constant, and had so turned all eyes upon him, that his feelings were deeply wounded. Finally he was moved to speak: "Gentlemen, before I left my home I promised to abstain from intoxicating drinks, and further urging on your part *I shall consider an insult!*" Brave and defiant words were those of Ebenezer Fisher, spoken in the face of ridicule, to some of the most prominent men of the Commonwealth. In their utterance, he rose above them all, overcame their ridicule, and compelled their respect.

In connection with his election to the Legislature, I have said that Mr. Fisher was favored of fortune. But this was not merely in that valuable experience which it gave him, nor in the important influence the company of leading Universalist clergymen exerted over him. Having determined to enter the ministry, he felt it his duty to make every possible preparation for its duties. He needed a class of books such as had not found their way into his country home, and what were then within reach he had no means of possessing. He imperatively needed that which in this age supplies many wants, — money. His office at the capital put money in his purse: it was not wasted. It in no regard ministered to any frivolous or transient want. Every dollar that his most rigid economy could save was given for the

books and incidental helps so indispensable to one who would enter upon a great task with a well-furnished mind. A new world of thoughts, of wisdom, of suggestion, opened to him. He took to his new and quickening studies as a miser takes to his gold, — except that the student never gloats over, but absorbs and assimilates, his gains. And the inventive, critical, robust intellect was indeed an absorbent, and much more.

Mr. Fisher never took opinions on trust. He looked at every proposition in the light of his own understanding. Not even the great names of the Ballous, both of whom he had come to revere, weighed with him as authorities. In certain points, he differed from them both. And he took nothing from either till he had carefully and dispassionately verified it. He absorbed only in the sense that he assimilated. He did not simply fill his mind: he "drew it out," — he educated it. The relentless criticism he afterwards poured out in the Essex Ministerial Circle (whereof there is a chapter further on), and which he never kept back for fear of hurting sensitive natures, he first of all applied to Ebenezer Fisher in the wilds of Washington County, Maine.

The legislative history came between his early labors in the ministry. Before his election to that important trust, he spent a winter at Milltown, which is a part of Calais, pursuing such theological studies as his then exceedingly scanty library permitted, and in preaching — it will cause a smile when the reader is told — *for his board!*

The Rev. I. C. Knowlton, in his little book, "Annals of Calais and St. Stephen," makes a note of this early stage in Mr. Fisher's ministerial career. He says: —

"In 1839, Rev. Ebenezer Fisher, D.D., a native of Charlotte, Maine, and now President of Canton Theological School, in New York, became pastor of the Milltown Universalist Society. He remained only six months; but his fervent piety, Christian deportment, and lucid expositions of the Gospel, imparted tone and strength to the young society." (p. 150.)

After his sojourn at the capital, with his replenished treasury, his new supply of books, and his new start on a much higher grade of intellectual outfit, he was formally settled with a regular salary. For the six successive years, beginning July, 1841, he was pastor of the Universalist church at Addison Point, not far from his old home. His *regular* salary was four hundred dollars a year. His *actual* salary differed considerably from the "regular." The first year he received little short of one hundred and fifty dollars. After the manner of ministers whose settlements are on the borders, Mr. Fisher made the "field" his parish. There were little parishes in the neighboring communities of Columbia, Epping, Indian River, and Cherryfield. For all of these, he was the preacher; and in their service he was always ready to go forth, either to preach the Word, or to give counsel and consolation. But his home and his formal settlement was Addison Point.

Two months after assuming the care of many little churches, he assumed another responsibility, in which

— some will say, as an exception to the rule — his first, only, and continual choice was fully met and satisfied. Of his many trials and disappointments, the one which so often afflicts tender youth he was happily spared. He never knew the pain of love unrequited, and of the corresponding hope deferred. On Sept. 27, 1841, he was married to Miss Amy W. Leighton, of Pembroke, Maine. In her he found a wife capable of fully appreciating his unusual abilities, and who has literally venerated his exalted Christian character. As a pastor's wife, and as his nearest and dearest associate in all his subsequent career, she has proved herself a helpmeet indeed. Of this I shall have occasion to give abundant examples, in describing the Canton history. Here seems the fitting place for making his family record. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Fisher were as follows: Ebenezer Everett (now Dr. Fisher of Richville, N. Y., a practising physician), born in Addison Point, Sept. 5, 1844; Amie L. (now Mrs. Bigelow, of Great Falls, N. H.), born in Salem, Mass., April 29, 1850; and Ellen Estelle, born in South Dedham (now Norwood), Mass., Feb. 24, 1855, and died Feb. 4, 1861, at Canton, N. Y. I can bear testimony that in all regards Mr. Fisher's was a Christian home, not alone in its altar of worship, in the duties of which he was conscientiously faithful and regular, but in the prevailing temper and conversation.

It is natural that the reader should ask how the family was affected by the startling appearance of one of

its members as a Universalist minister, at a time when, and in a neighborhood where, the faith of Universalism was bitterly spoken against. At first it gave the mother some anxiety. But the maternal instinct was too strong for prejudice. Going to his native home, he was solicited to preach. He did so, and nearly the whole population came out, drawn by curiosity in part, and in part from the profound respect all were compelled to cherish for a young man of such uprightness of character and evident sincerity of belief. One of the sisters felt that her Baptist principles were in danger of compromise, and so she repressed the natural anxiety to hear her brother preach. But the mother knew that her son was a Christian, and she was sure that he could not preach any thing that would be productive of other than good. The next step was natural, in her case inevitable. She became a Universalist herself.

The six years of unremitting toil on a very scanty support, of the several little parishes of which the one at Addison Point was the principal, are sufficient proof that Mr. Fisher was not a restless spirit, eager for change, and ever watching for better and more lucrative positions. Circumstances, in the shaping of which he had no part, were preparing for him an important post of duty. He did not actively seek it: he was sought.

The cackling of geese saved Rome. Daniel Webster was reported as having said that the circumstance that a particular soldier in the army of General Wolfe could speak French led to the war of the Revolution. The

chain of consequences is often composed of most incongruous links. At certain epochs, there seem to be epidemics of speculation. The South Sea Bubble in one form or another is repeated in history. Somewhere about the year 1837, the mania that infected all New England was the Down-East Land Speculation. Ardent imaginations saw untold gold in the woods of Maine. At that period, my own home being in a town bordering on the Penobscot, I saw crowds come and go on the pioneer steamboat of eastern waters, the "Bangor." Too young to know what speculating meant, I distinctly remember that the business of that boat was to bring men to that part of Maine, to speculate in its lands and forests.

But what has this to do with the founding or building of a Theological School? We shall see. Among the many families that got involved in the speculation craze, were the Devereauxs of Salem, Mass., and Cherryfield was a centre of their interest. General George H. Devereaux, of that city, a man of marked ability, an active politician and an orator, went to Cherryfield to look after the property, and in the search lost his own. He happened to be there at the time of Mr. Fisher's settlement at Addison Point, who at that time, as I have before stated, had a regular preaching station at Cherryfield. General Devereaux was a Unitarian. He had no particular sympathy with formal Universalism, or with the denomination. No sectarian bias impelled him to seek the acquaintance of the Universalist

preacher, who at regular periods came from Addison Point to preach in Cherryfield. But he was a judge of character. At the first sight of the Universalist preacher, General Devereaux was struck, not so much with what he already was, as with the promise that was literally stamped upon his features. He *felt* that the unfolding genius of greatness was in the soul of the man. He sought his acquaintance, and was uniformly present when he came to the neighborhood on professional duty. He talked about him, and said that there was a power in that man that time would bring to light. He saw in him capability, character, and a presence, which clearly indicated that he was a born leader of his fellows. He said that the sign-manual of greatness was upon him. Though many years his senior, General Devereaux confessed that there was in the young man something that touched him with awe.

In the month of April, 1846, the Rev. Linus S. Everett closed a pastorate of five years in Salem. The parish remained near thirteen months without a settled minister, depending upon supplies and hearing candidates. Learning that the Salem committee was anxious to secure a pastor as soon as the "right man" could be found, General Devereaux — who had returned to his Salem home — said to some of the members that a strong and rising man was preaching at a remote place, Addison Point, Maine. He gave his earnest opinion that Mr. Fisher was fully equal to any reasonable expectation. He said that the Unitarian was the

church of his choice, and was likely to remain so; but he felt almost certain that the Universalist parish and the city would be the gainers, if the pastor at Addison Point was called.

The advice was heeded. Mr. Fisher was heard as a candidate. He created no "sensation." There was nothing at all sensational, or specially brilliant in his pulpit efforts. He impressed every one as a man of unusual mental strength. He was seen to be surcharged with character. Every one felt for him an instinctive respect, and paid him deference. It is simple fact to say that he evoked no passionate enthusiasm. The proper word is not enthusiasm, but confidence. He did not thrill; but he impressed. The adjectives his efforts evoked were not "smart," nor "magnificent," nor "superb." He rather suggested the idea of weight, of wisdom, of leadership. It was not "Camilla skipping along the main," but Ajax rolling the massive stone. There appeared to be more in the man than in his words.

There was one objection raised which, under the circumstances, was certainly amusing, and this for the reason that it was seriously meant. He was "too old!" A younger man could better attend to the many duties of so large a parish! Too old? He was thirty-two! He was younger than some who raised the objection. Those who knew Mr. Fisher at that time will understand how such an objection could be seriously entertained. I have cited in part Mr. Samuel Fisher's

words, "Ebenezer never was a boy: he never had any youth. When he was ten, he was a man; when he was twenty, he was venerable." The profound seriousness of his nature was evinced in his childhood. He was constitutionally venerable. His stalwart frame, his large round head, the whiteness of his complexion, his premature baldness, his heavy voice, all gave the mien, the accent, and the impression of wisdom, from which years can hardly be dissociated.

The last time I saw him in 1877, at the Universalist Publishing House on Cornhill, he did not seem to me a year older than he seemed just thirty years ago, when I first met him at the house of Dr. A. A. Miner in Boston. That impression of some of the Salem people that he was "too old" was an honest one. When it was explained, "He is but thirty-two," they looked at the man again, and *knew* there must be a mistake. It was no uncommon thing for his seniors in years to imagine themselves his juniors, and allude to him as venerable. But with all his gravity of demeanor, he had the heat of youth, and a fund of humor. He never failed in meeting wit with wit, a joke with a retort, and few relished a story more keenly, and, though not over-flowing in the story-telling propensity, he rarely failed to have one for the contingency, which he always told with the story-telling accent. No one understood the gravity and venerableness of his bearing better than himself; and, so far from being annoyed at the frequent mistakes in regard to his age, it was always to him a source of

amusement. In an address on the "Character and Influence" of Dr. Fisher given at the Memorial Service at Boston, by the Rev. O. T. Safford, — formerly a student at Canton, — discriminating allusion is made to the characteristic which I have sought to describe; and one of Dr. Fisher's sayings, which I have several times heard directly from him, was cited. After alluding to the dignity of his presence, Mr. Safford says: —

"Dr. Fisher early drew to himself the reverential regard which we are accustomed to bestow on honorable age. I have heard him say, with his quiet smile, 'When I arrived at the ripe age of thirty-one years, I began to be called Father Fisher.' Perhaps a protracted sickness in his early manhood, with its bodily pain and spiritual discipline, helped to give him this peculiar appearance. He always bore it with a becoming grace. Yet it is but fair to say, those of us who were intimately associated with him in our early manhood were not accustomed to call him 'Father Fisher,' even after years might naturally have brought to him the honorary title. He always seemed to us to have in his heart the perennial spirit of youth. He entered with sympathy into our early hopes; he had even sympathetic kindness for the extravagances of our youthful dreams and tastes. He was invisibly clothed with the mantle of Faust. Still, as indicative so far only of his bodily appearance, we note that the external Dr. Fisher was such a majestic man that reverent hearts, which did not know the pulse of his inner life, instinctively gave him the honor and authority due to age. Had he been a priest of the Roman church, he would have been called a father not so much by canonical requirement as by virtue of his being, in presence and bearing, a natural adviser and leader."

Returning to the preaching on trial at Salem, the "objection" which I have described, and for which I have accounted, did not prove serious. The Salem parish had not been every way fortunate in some of its recent pastors. The strange career of Rev. Matthew Hale Smith — as I write these words but just deceased — had been an injury to the church in alienating some of its members, and in the injury to its prestige in the community. The Rev. L. S. Everett, very capable, and in some respects very popular, had exhibited a few eccentricities, — I infer that they merit no harsher name, — whereby his personal influence was impaired and the reputation of the parish had incidentally suffered. The older and more experienced members of the parish, having an eye to the great necessity of recovering the good name which the Rev. Lemuel Willis, a former pastor, had given to it, and of conquering the few prejudices that recent history had created, saw in the strong mind and exalted character of the candidate a providential man. Mr. Fisher received an unanimous call. On the fourth day of May, 1847, he was duly installed pastor of the Salem Universalist Church.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SALEM PASTORATE.

Leaders in the Universalist Church. — A pivotal Period. — Status of the Denomination. — "Anti-Orthodox" Prejudices. — Lack of Institution. — Inefficient Organization. — Need of Change imperative. — Mr. Fisher's instant Apprehension of the Need. — A Home Mission. — 1850. — Local Prejudices. — The Anti-slavery Agitation. — A "Bone of Contention." — Effect upon Churches. — Change in the Defence of Slavery. — Attempts to make it national. — The Free-soil Party. — The Dilemma of Pastors. — Radical and Conservative. — Mr. Fisher Conservative. — Meets a new Issue. — The "Maine Law." — Mr. Fisher's active Interest in the Temperance Cause. — His ideal Pastor. — Success in Salem. — Character of his Sermons. — Influential rather than popular Example of Confidence. — Love for the Church. — Parochial Fidelity. — Illness. — Resigns the Salem Pastorate. — Letters on his Father's Death.

THE call of Dr. Fisher to the pastorate of the Salem Universalist Church marks an important epoch in his career. It brought him into close and sympathetic relations with several leading minds of the denomination. Hosea Ballou was indeed in the decline of his physical powers, yet he was an active spirit in the church, preaching frequently on Sunday; and there was seldom a meeting of his State Convention, or his Association, that he did not attend, usually to take an

active part in the deliberations. Hosea Ballou, 2d, was in the ripeness of his mental powers, and merited the reputation he bore, — that of being the ablest thinker, the almost authoritative writer, and the wise man, among his brethren. Sebastian Streeter was the minister at the old Hanover Street Church, Boston; and the radical change of the population, so destructive to nearly every Protestant congregation at the North End, had but just set in, and had produced but little of the disastrous effects upon Mr. Streeter's parish which at a not much later day were fatal. Otis A. Skinner was the pastor of the Warren Street Church, and in the denomination his prestige was deservedly great. Thomas Whittemore was conducting the "Trumpet," and his magical influence had suffered no eclipse. I might add the names of others who had risen to a commanding position, and whose special sphere of labor was the neighborhood which includes Salem. But I restrict the enumeration to those who have gone higher.

Again, the date of Mr. Fisher's settlement in Salem marks with much precision a pivotal period in the development of the Universalist denomination. Up to about that period, the Universalist method had been mainly — by no means exclusively — polemical. Its past was an age of controversy. Its instrument was exegesis, and this restricted to those portions of Scripture which for centuries had been construed into teaching the doctrine of endless punishment, and to those other passages which were by Universalists deemed

positive in the inculcation of the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. So largely had this special style of labor absorbed — and under the hostile, almost venomous state of so-called Orthodox public sentiment necessarily absorbed — the thought and the zeal of Universalist parishes, ministers, and editors, that even the Sunday-school enterprise was greatly in abeyance; while the great interests of church extension by specific and regular methods, and of schools under church auspices, had hardly arrested the thought of the mass of Universalist believers. There was no college where the sons of Universalist parents could receive a classic culture, and be secure against hostile sectarian influences. There was no theological school in which young men could receive systematic training for the Universalist ministry. There were three or four feeble academies, working wonders indeed when their limited facilities are considered, in the educational way. This was all. Church organization cannot be said to have been at a low ebb, for it had never been at any thing of a flood. The General Convention was nothing but a mass meeting: it had not the pretence of prerogative. The State Conventions were no better. The name was grand: the thing was a shadow. The only thing that with any propriety can be called a power was that which regulated discipline and determined fellowship, and this was largely in the hands of small Associations, in some instances not including a half

dozen "societies," as the parishes were then generally called.

The Universalist movement had been spontaneous. It did not advance on any particular plan. It had indeed a ruling idea, but it had no ruling purpose. It was impulsive, but not methodical. The contribution box was unpopular, — a relic of Orthodoxy suggestive of Foreign Missions. A parish that was self-supporting was in a state of ideal prosperity. That it should be called upon as occasional contributor in response to the "Macedonian cry," was deemed presuming; that it should be asked to make regular contributions for church extension, — such an idea had not, save in a very few cases, been invented.

Strong, wise, foreseeing, faithful men saw that almost a total revolution in these regards must be effected, or else that the days of the Universalist Church as a distinct movement were numbered. There must be colleges, divinity schools, missions, organization "for work," and a literature, — a weekly press, representative of these enterprises, — or the tent of the Universalist Israel must soon be struck. In nearly every State where Universalism had any noticeable strength, there were a few such leading spirits. They were most abundant in New York and New England. Candor will not deem it a local prejudice if I add that the principal strength of this new conviction was the neighborhood which, having Boston for its centre, was of about the diameter that took in Salem.

The leading men whose names I have given were older than Mr. Fisher. He, though always of venerable aspect, really belonged to the younger and succeeding generation. Just what were his thoughts touching the future of the denomination with which he was connected at the time of his call to Salem, I have not learned; but it is certain that he at once responded to the convictions which at the time were influencing the action of the leaders in the Universalist movement. He no sooner apprehended the new purpose than he found himself in profound sympathy with it; and from 1847 to the day of his death Universalism found in no other a more devoted, faithful, consecrated believer in the imperativeness of institutions of learning, missionary endeavor, and efficient organization.

To many of my readers, this statement may not seem to assert any thing more than a matter of course. Why should not a sincere man commit himself to measures needful to the advocacy of his belief? The younger generation of Universalists can hardly be made to understand the prejudice which those of a former generation had conceived against church missions and authoritative organization. The Calvinism of that earlier day was directly associated with ecclesiastical power and with missions; and to the earlier Universalists Calvinism with all its adjuncts was very repulsive. At first the Sunday school had been resisted on the ground that it was "imitating the Orthodox." The contribution-box provoked the same objection. The mis-

sionary idea yet more strongly called forth the comment which with not a few was thought conclusive of all controversy; and efficient organization suggested visions of inquisitorial fires and thumb-screws. As I write, it is not thirty-five years since the Universalists as a people were for the reasons explained hostile to all the auxiliaries of the parish or church, with the single exception of the Sunday school. It is within the past thirty years that any thing has been done to correct that unfortunate inheritance of prejudice.

The position which, as I have said, Mr. Fisher at once took, was therefore the conclusive proof of a mind and heart that could judge of things according to their intrinsic merits, and not be diverted by a sentiment which, however natural, was most illogical. And he showed his faith by his works. The only missionary enterprise under Universalist auspices that had a name to live was the Home Mission, carried on by the Boston Association, its endeavors being limited to the territory covered by that body. The new Salem pastor was at once made an officer of the Mission, and he plead for it, worked for it, always with judicious zeal and always in faith.

We never can say just when an old order of things departs and a new order succeeds. This would be determining the line which separates the sapling from the tree, the boy from the man. We can only approximate such a pivotal period. I should assign the change somewhat arbitrarily to the year 1850, — not forgetting,

however, nor failing to record the fact, that certain initial movements looking towards church extension, — then called home missions, — and the founding of the first Universalist College, had always given promise of realization. And that may be set down as the date, not of Mr. Fisher's call to Salem, but of his being engaged in the work of his large parish. He may therefore be said to have entered the neighborhood of the leading minds of the denomination just at the time that the denomination, under its leaders, was to attempt a new phase of enterprise and put itself on a constructive and progressive basis.

The entire period of Mr. Fisher's pastorate in Salem was singularly exempt from social convulsion. The famous revival under the lead of Elder Jacob Knapp, which put all Universalist churches on the defence, and which occasioned a popular sympathy in their behalf, had been succeeded by a state of public indifference. It fell to Rev. Linus S. Everett to minister from the pulpit of the Universalist Church during the throes of that fanatical agitation. He was a man of war, and in the excitement found a congenial element. Those who were associated with him during this singular epoch, having perhaps different estimates of his general pastoral career, agree in testifying that he led the Universalist forces in the conflict with great ability. The controversy was bitter, but it was provoked. The opposition to Universalism was pharisaical, unscrupulous, immoral. It dealt in attacks on personal character, in

gross and malicious misrepresentation, in slander and untruths. In a word it was wicked, and it disgraced all who took a responsible part in conducting it. I am told that Mr. Everett paid back in telling invective; that he parried the blows of the enemy with consummate skill; that he maintained an assailed faith with unsurpassed eloquence, rigid logic, and a masterly handling of the Divine Word. And he had his reward in a wonderful measure of popular approval, his church being filled to the full limits of its capacity.

Mr. Everett left, and there was an interregnum of a little more than a year. A reaction set in. There was a falling-off in all the churches. The unusual strain was followed by a shrivel quite as marked. Under these circumstances, Mr. Fisher accepted the call from the Salem church. His pastorate in Salem extended from May 4, 1847, to Oct. 7, 1853, — about six and one-half years. I have said that this was a period of profound quiet in the churches. There were no theological convulsions; there were few revivals, so called. Each of the sects pursued the even tenor of its way, but little disposed to interfere with the doings of any other. The so-called evangelical churches made few attacks upon Universalism or Universalists. They certainly attempted no such crusades as followed the defection of Matthew Hale Smith and the frantic and pharisaical demonstrations of Mr. Knapp. But they stood aloof; they retained all their self-asserted superiority on the score of sound doctrine and personal

piety. They had no fellowship with Universalists, and never exchanged an ecclesiastical courtesy. It was rare that there was even a social recognition. The oldest active pastor in the city — that is, of the evangelical fold — refused to read notices of even charitable meetings, having no manner of sectarian intent, when they were to be held in the Universalist church. He was a good man; and he sincerely believed that his own pulpit would be contaminated should he, save in the way of censure and protest, pronounce the word "Universalist" from his sacred desk! I ought, even at the risk of an apparent digression, to add that, so far as the prejudice against Universalism is concerned, it was the profound darkness that brought the morn. Not many years after, the same clergyman was willing and glad to stand in the Universalist pulpit of the same city and preach to the regular congregation, and to do this in the Christian courtesy which, out of the vast number of Christian themes, selected for elucidation one that could offend no prejudice. But, during the six years of Mr. Fisher's Salem history, such a courtesy, such a sense of propriety, was a thing unheard of; and at the time he began that pastorate I doubt if the social recognition was ever cordial.

To meet and stamp out, not simply as unjust but as ridiculous, this Pharisaic conceit and occult insult, Ebenezer Fisher was a providential man. It was idle for any one of any sect to put on the air of superior sanctity in the presence of a man who in every accent

and every act reflected and exemplified the spirit of his Divine Master. The great public seldom fails to discern character. The Salem public saw, felt, even confessed that of the several worthy pastors in that staid city, if any one was the spiritual Saul, conspicuous and commanding in all the elements and graces of the Christian profession and character, that man was Ebenezer Fisher. His superiority in those particulars which force general homage, in the current expressive phrase, "stood out." He could afford not to be noticed, not to be sensitive in view of any affectation, occult or expressed, of Christian superiority. Public sentiment made such an assertion an occasion for derision. To the Universalist faith, profession, denomination, and work, the name and character of Ebenezer Fisher were a savor unto life.

In this I am dwelling upon the most important phase of the Salem pastorate; yet it is one difficult of description. It is not one of details, of events, of words; it is one of radiation, and hardly admits of analysis. But I would emphasize it as the very highest tribute that can be paid to a minister of the gospel. In the subsequent change which early came over the churches of the city, in the direction of a sounder appreciation of what makes the Christian man, and which breathes a much more catholic and genial spirit, I trace in a pre-eminent degree the potent and pervasive spirit of the noble man who from 1847 to 1853 filled the pulpit of the Universalist church.

The six years during which Mr. Fisher was the Salem pastor were, as I have said, years of unusual quiet in ecclesiastical circles. They, however, mark an important epoch in affairs of State, and in two regards, — the one in reference to the institution of slavery, and the other in reference to the temperance agitation.

The Anti-slavery movement may be said to have many epochs. The attempted murder of Garrison by a Boston mob; the actual murder of Lovejoy; the martyrdom of Torrey; the annexation of Texas; the war with Mexico; the repeal of the Missouri Compromise Act; the enactment of the Fugitive-slave Law, — each notes a stage in the antecedents of the most bloody and destructive of all modern wars, ending in the destruction of slavery by constitutional provision and congressional legislation. At first the agitation began in private offices, obscure and protected halls; soon to invade the caucus; next to monopolize the lyceum; and then to enter, in some cases to destroy, the churches.

Statesmen, politicians, and pastors soon made the unwelcome discovery that, despite themselves, they must elect one of two methods of action, — either of which would be attended with sacrifice of friendships, of position, of emolument, some of them sincerely believed of usefulness. To the question: Precisely what put the "bone of contention" into the pulpit? different persons, estimating from different points of view, will, in the answer, name somewhat different events. If not

rigidly and chronologically correct, my own answer cannot be at all misleading, and it is sufficiently accurate to answer my present purpose. I designate the forming of the Free-soil Party in 1848. Up to this event, slavery if not actually was nominally sectional. It was a State institution, and the leaders of both the great parties were committed against its extension into territory at the time free. Henry Clay hardly damaged his prestige in the slave States when he said, in the United States Senate, that no man was more firmly opposed to the extending of the institution into the territories then free, than himself.

But the results growing out of the war with Mexico were attended with a great and prophetic change in this vital regard. The determination of the Southern extremists was that every new free State should be balanced with a new slave State. In other words, the institution which by common consent had been regarded as sectional was to be made national. The object of the new political party was to resist the new movement, — to check the aggression; not to interfere with slavery in any State, but to prevent its extension in the territories which were the property not of the States, but of the Union.

Whether or not this new danger in the spread of barbarism and of barbarizing institutions, with the new political movement to resist it, can be said to have compelled the churches and the ecclesiastical bodies to take a position in regard thereto, — some will see this

cause in earlier, others in later, events, — no one will dispute me when I say that this was very prominent and very marked among the disturbing agencies. The division in the church was very serious and very sad. The pastor who "bore his testimony" against the growing evil was at once assailed with invective, and in many instances was practically, if not officially, notified that the church had not employed him as a "preacher of politics." The pastor who bravely apologized for the institution and made light of the threatened danger, or who persisted in avoiding all allusion to the exciting topic, was assailed as a trimmer, a time-server, a betrayer of his Master; or else he was laughed at as a "fossil" utterly dead to the one great living issue. The facetious wail of one pastor literally describes the dilemma: "If I say a word against slavery, I am mobbed: if I say nothing on the subject, still I am mobbed!"

In regard to the duty of the pulpit, there were two very dissimilar theories. The one said that the gospel is not a political institution, nor a set of political measures, but a spirit and a life. It consists not of measures, but of principles. Its address is to the reason and the heart, and out of the heart are the issues of life. Its counsel was: Preach the gospel, and the gospel will take care of the politics. The favorite text was: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are His." The other theory was that the gospel is revealed against all evil; that it

proclaims liberty to the captive; that slavery, being "the sum of all villanies," is by pre-eminence the evil to be assailed; that for consequences man is not responsible; that he must do his duty "though the heavens fall."

Between these theories, the points of agreement were so subtile that there was no room for adjustment or compromise. One party execrated the minister who disturbed the peace of congregations, and endangered the stability of churches. The other party execrated the minister who did not, to the extent of his ability and opportunity, destroy and bury out of sight every church which did not declare itself against the sin of the day. In the contest, many a congregation was scattered, and many a church was left to the owls and the bats; and to this day, in not a few communities, the fragments have never been gathered up.

In his youth, Mr. Fisher was a Whig. Every Whig at the North was nominally opposed to slavery, — some moderately opposed, others strongly opposed. The strongly opposed were alarmed. They took the name of "Conscience" Whigs to distinguish themselves from the "Cotton" Whigs, or those who, in the interests of manufacture and trade, were disposed to compromise their opposition. The Conscience Whigs merged into the new Free-soil Party.

Mr. Fisher was strongly opposed to slavery, and he at once became a member of the new organization and acted with it. Still he was conservative. I made this

discovery the second time I saw him, at his own house in Salem. My own antislavery feeling was strong, and I was in much sympathy with the brave minister — some called him the rash one — who gave his conviction without reserve, and regardless of consequences. Not far from Salem, a minister (not Universalist) had by his "fidelity" divided and, it was supposed, destroyed a once large and influential church. In the conviction which at the time filled and controlled me, I thought only of the "fidelity." Giving the name of the minister, I said to Mr. Fisher: "That is my idea of a minister of the Gospel." His reply was: "Because he has destroyed a church?" I saw that *his* mind, if it did not rest upon, very clearly took in, the "consequences."

It was my lot to be very near Mr. Fisher during the period which I have described. We talked much upon the general subject, and, so far as the principles involved were concerned, we had no difference of opinion. But my own temperament was "radical;" his was cool and conservative. My own judgment as to the expedient was not in many regards his. We differed at the time. In later years, we more strongly differed. As an editor of a denominational paper, I more than once felt moved to criticise some of his public utterances, in which either slavery or some incident of slavery made the issue. And he criticised me in turn. I should not make any display of my personal convictions and tendencies in reference to the subject, except

that, in frankly stating the fact of my dissent, I can the more emphatically say that of Mr. Fisher's motives I never had a distrust. I thought then, and I now think, that he was not actuated by any feeling of selfish timidity, by any trimming which compromised his integrity. He thought it a duty to consider probable consequences, and he did not believe that a prudential course was necessarily a sacrifice of the great principles involved. He sincerely believed that the Christian Church was, with all its faults, with all its shortcomings, the most precious institution the world possessed. His theory was, — to use a phrase which afterwards came into use, — that it could be more effectively reformed from within than from without. And he had a horror of the iconoclastic spirit and the reckless assaults of not a few "reformers" with whom antislavery was, in his judgment, more of a hobby than a conviction. Accordingly he at once sought to give expression to his conviction, and yet hold to the church persons with whose prejudices he must come in contact. But he never temporized in the sense of giving an uncertain sound, of using ambiguous terms, of being all things to all men in the sense not Apostolic.

A member of Congress attempted to justify the institution of slavery from the Bible. In this the issue was changed. Said Mr. Fisher, "If they say I have no right to bring the Bible against slavery, they certainly have no right to bring slavery against the Bible." On that ground he prepared a sermon, every

word of which went to the quick, and this at a time when a timid or selfish man would not have ventured upon the theme. It gave to many excellent people of his congregation deep offence. He was sorry to offend, to cross their prejudices, to alienate them from himself; but he never retreated from the ground he had taken. In ecclesiastical conventions and associations, the "bone of contention" was uniformly present, and the usual missile, a set of "resolutions," never failed. In every case he met the issue, and by speech and vote was always on the side of liberty. But he did not make the theme prominent. His course was, as I have said, cautious and considerate. I pause not here to consider the question, What will be the judgment upon his method when the time shall come for a proper judgment to be formed? I am content to repeat that his motives were pure and his intentions sincere.

The philanthropic question which the more deeply interested him was that of temperance. The then recent legislation in the State of Maine, under the lead of the Honorable Neal Dow, seemed to him just in principle and wise in policy. In the pulpit and out of it he was the champion of the "Maine Law," — the name for legal prohibition begun in the State of Maine. But he never forgot, — he complained that many seemed to forget, — that the public sentiment must be forced up to the requirements of the statute to make the same of any avail. He was therefore an earnest and zealous worker in the temperance cause. During the period of

his settlement in Salem he was the leader of that cause in the city. By natural appointment, he was put at the head of any organization which had the cause of temperance for its object. If a committee was appointed, he was put on it, and then was made its chairman. If a public meeting was called, he was appointed to preside. If a delegate was to be sent to a temperance convention, he was made the delegate. If a report was to be made, he was summoned to prepare the report. And he literally *worked*, untiring in his fidelity and conscientious in his zeal. In truth he once complained to me that the old city was not up to its duty, and he deeply mourned that in so important a cause he had so few co-laborers.

The pastor to whom Mr. Fisher made frequent allusions as almost ideal was his predecessor, the Rev. Lemuel Willis. Other ministers may have excelled him in the ability of their discourses, in the brilliancy of their rhetoric, in the magnetism of their manner, and in the attraction which fills the pews. But — I have heard him make the statement frequently — the man who put the Salem church on its true basis, who gave to it the elements of character, who made it strong and influential in the community, was Lemuel Willis. His respect for consecrated, toiling, constant workers was profound. I may add a remark he once made to me in reference to an estimable clergyman, who passed on several years ago. I made some allusion to the Rev. J. W. Putnam, — such an one as naturally elicited Mr.

Fisher's estimate of his character and his work as a minister. "Brother Putnam," said he, "is a man to do a great deal of work and make no fuss about it." I think it simple fact to say that Mr. Fisher's ideals were practical workers. He was always about his Master's business, and he made no boast of what he attempted. I am sure that, in the desirable qualities of character and Christian influence, the Salem church greatly prospered under his ministry. A man whom all must honor and respect, even if they cannot in all things agree with him in belief and policy, must, even of moderate ability, be a helper and a strengthener. But to the qualities which compel a deference bordering on veneration, Mr. Fisher added great abilities. His sermons were prepared with conscientious care. They were packed with thought, and they were aglow with the spirituality of his reverent nature. Sometimes, indeed, they "shot over," and did not exactly take the measure of average capability. Sometimes, from the affluence of his imagery, — in the use of metaphor I never knew his superior, — they were not always clear. Indeed, I have heard him when the sermon savored somewhat of mysticism, and people would say, "I do not get the idea." I once heard him on one of his favorite topics, — "The Reconciliation of Man to God," — in which, as I afterwards told him, he seemed to forget that the majority of hearers are not educated in the niceties of theological lore. But in these instances of possibly misapplied strength, I am giving the exception

and not the rule. In most instances he was intelligible and impressive. He was never exactly a "popular" preacher; he was too great a man to be that. In those examples in which men of towering ability are also extremely popular, I think they would themselves confess that the gifts which enable them to please the multitude are not the ones on which they themselves place the highest estimate. The gifted Robertson, perhaps without a half-dozen peers in the pulpit of his day, whose published sermons are mines of wisdom — of the richest thought — was in fact the "popular preacher" of a watering-place. He knew that he was, and the consciousness was the humiliation of his professional life. Mr. Fisher had the first-class gifts; I think he did not supplement them with the second class, which take a strong hold of the superficial. I am sure that the very general confession of his hearers would be that under his ministry they were profited rather than electrified, and that they found in his inculcations a means of grace. I have described meagrely the kind of success which rewarded his labors in Salem. It is a much higher order of success than that which is "showy" and as evanescent as it is superficial.

Out of many incidents I select one as illustrative of the hold he had upon his people. One of his parishioners once said to me: "Mr. Fisher called on me the other day and said that he wanted money for a charitable object. He was about to explain what the object was; I interrupted him. 'Mr. Fisher,' I said, 'I want

no explanation. Here is the money, and, if you want more, call again.' When such a man as he tells me that the object is worthy, I ask no questions." In truth he was an Israelite in whom there was no guile. Every member of the Salem parish held the Christian ministry in higher confidence and respect because of the man who occupied the Universalist pulpit. That was Mr. Fisher's success. It was a success which every pastor might covet.

Mr. Fisher loved the church of Christ. Between that and himself, he would permit nothing to interfere. He loved the particular branch of that church which represented the Universalist faith. He was wholly devoted to the particular local church over which he found himself placed. I heard him once say: "My smallest success is where I would have my greatest; I cannot, as I would, interest my people in the ordinances of the church."

In the general affairs of the parish, he rightly deemed his labors reasonably successful. His congregations were large, regular, and in a great degree interested in the work of the parish. He was faithful to all the pastoral duties. He never forgot or neglected the infirm or the sick; and in his parochial labors he remembered who was his Master, and he made calls not for gossip or mere social pleasure, but for the sake of making some impression for good. And in this he was considerate; he had no "good talk" which meant nothing; he was not obtrusive in giving his convictions or prof-

fering counsel; he knew how to work by indirection. But always the end in view was such as became his profession and his life.

In the pulpit he was at once doctrinal and practical, — two things which he never divorced. He had a high and a strong ambition to make Universalists in belief; he had a higher and a stronger one to make Universalist Christians in the temper and conduct of their lives.

Near the middle of the year 1853, Mr. Fisher was taken somewhat suddenly with serious illness. Its precise nature was not exactly understood. Possibly it was the incipient stage of the disease which ultimately proved fatal. But one of its accompaniments was an affection of the throat. At the outset it may have been nothing more than a throat difficulty. It suddenly disabled him. He took a rest of several weeks, sojourning at his old home in Maine; but the rest did not restore him. It was clear that for the time at least he was physically disqualified for the exacting position and arduous duties of the Salem pastorate. The future, so far as his earthly work was concerned, was dark and ominous. He did not know, but he had reason to apprehend, that his career for this world might be near its close. He accordingly resigned his charge Oct. 7, 1853; and, like Abraham of old, he went forth not knowing whither.

I give here extracts from letters to his family and friends in Maine, occasioned by the illness and the death of his father. They are characteristic in their

indication of the religious temper of his mind and heart, and also reveal the thought with which he contemplated the final call. On hearing of his father's illness, he writes under date July 4, 1849 (I give but an extract) : —

"Mr. N—— called here to-day, about an hour before I received D——'s letter. His report was rather unfavorable as to father's health, which it gave us pain to hear. But I have thought for many months that his work was almost done ; and I trust that, when the will of Providence calls him hence, he will be ready to go without reluctance. Death is always near to us all, in possibility, and certainly cannot be very remote. It is the ordinance of our Creator, and, since it is inevitable, and not left to our choice, cannot be a great evil. It does not take us beyond the reach of God's goodness, nor beyond his government. To my thoughts it has much of sorrow, but more of hope : the sorrow is for those who remain, and not for those who are called.

'Its duty done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load the spirit flies.'"

I add an extract from a letter to his Maine people, on getting the intelligence of his father's decease. It is dated Feb. 19, 1850 : —

"We received D —— 's letter on the following Thursday ; and I could not but be affected by the intelligence of father's death. As he has seemed to be something better, we had cherished the hope of seeing him again alive, which was what we did not anticipate when we left C ——. I am thankful, however, that his departure was so easy, and, as I gathered from the letter, attended with so little pain. I felt that his work was done, and rejoice that he was spared a painful sick-

ness. No doubt he suffered, yet I hope not severely. We ought all to remember that in real philanthropic goodness of heart, which desires to help every one, he was eminent. But for that perhaps he might have left more worldly goods, but not a richer legacy to his children. But he has gone, and the best praise is to imitate whatever was excellent in his character. It would have been a melancholy pleasure could I have been with him to have said the last possible farewell. But I know not how soon we shall meet again.

"I preached last Sunday afternoon on the 'Recognition of Friends in Heaven,' and felt my mind much elevated by the consideration of that theme."

CHAPTER V.

THE ESSEX MINISTERIAL CIRCLE.

The Essex Ministerial Circle. — A School of mutual Criticism. — Its Topics. — No Mercy given. — None asked. — Members of the Circle. — Ebenezer Fisher the leading Spirit. — His extraordinary Facility as a Critic. — Fallacies laid bare. — Emotional Rhetoric. — Examples of Criticism. — The Manner more than the Matter. — Takes his turn as Target. — Visiting Ministers. — Becomes famed as a Critic. — An Adjunct of the Circle. — Classic Elocution. — "Head Voice." — Private Practice. — A rumored "Quarrel" in Church. — The Explanation. — Brutus and Cassius. — The Misapprehension natural.

AS incidental to the Salem settlement, I must go back to trace an institution of great importance in itself, of greater importance in what it occasioned, — the forerunner in some respects of the first Universalist theological school. With this incident, Mr. Fisher had constant and sympathetic relations. His connection therewith was coincident with his labors in the Salem parish.

Of the many associations of ministers for mutual improvement, I am led to doubt if any one ever accomplished a larger measure of usefulness than the "Essex Ministerial Circle." Certainly, of those with whose work I am familiar, or of which I have any

means of information, no other has ever done such solid and durable service to its members. I was connected with it for a period of five years, and of its members now living probably no one attended so many of its sessions as myself. I have seen, in not a few instances, rather crude material enter it, to leave it with manifold and marked improvements. Many a bladder of conceit was punctured within its precincts; many a soaring bird of rhetoric had its wings clipped; many a long-drawn sentence was suddenly contracted; many a lame metaphor was made to disclose its infirmity; many a carefully constructed syllogism had its props knocked from under it; many an ambitious simile was forced to hide its diminished head; many an oratorical climax was brought low, — all under the criticism which in that body knew no mercy and gave no quarter.

All manner of topics were duly considered by the thinkers of the circle. Unfortunately, the Darwinian theory of species, — the formula of the "survival of the fittest," — and the sparkling hypotheses of Tyndall and Huxley, had not, at the date of the circle's most active career, been invented, or at least had attained nothing of their present celebrity. We say "unfortunately," for of course they would have been each and all duly tested and disposed of. But we had such live topics as the "Vestiges of the Creation;" the sinfulness of war, even if defensive; non-resistance; slavery; the Fugitive Slave Law; the minister's duty

to preach politics in all cases where the politics include "moral issues," — every one of which had its measure of consideration. To say that Divine sovereignty, free will, the origin of evil, the genesis of sin, did not receive ample consideration, — the champion in each case settling the problem, — would be to say that the Circle was not composed of clergymen. Just how frequently the names of Sir William Hamilton, Dr. McCosh, the several writers of the "Essays and Reviews," Dugald Stewart, and Thomas Babington Macaulay, were enunciated, and the wisdom of each indorsed or doubted, I undertake not to say. I only record the fact that they became to us as "household words." I have lived to doubt if the Circle settled any of the matters in dispute; but with every memory of its active gatherings I am renewedly impressed with the disciplinary value of the ordeal through which each in his turn passed.

I have said that the Circle knew no mercy and gave no quarter. This is the literal truth of history. In all other literary bodies with which I have had any connection, there was ever a disposition to temper justice with mercy; to sugar-coat the bitter potion; to clothe an adverse comment in apologetic phraseology, — in a word, to let the victim down gently. If there was ever any thing of this humane temper manifested in the Essex Circle, it was always by the newest comer in making his maiden criticism. But he never repeated the weakness. At his second visit he was almost uniformly put into the pillory; and if any mark of human kind-

ness for the perpetrator of a lame sentence or a faulty deduction remained in him, the ordeal never failed to dry it at its source. The scalpel was the implement, and a searching thoroughness in its use was the rule with no exception.

Such is the strange force of custom that I do believe the gibbet would have but a tithe of its horror if, from the nature of the case, its office were not such as to preclude the idea of repetition. I know this, — that the first experience of being a target for every one's arrow often gave great pain. But I recollect hardly an instance in which, on the repetition, the victim did not rather enjoy it. He knew that for every assailant his turn was coming! In fact, any thing savoring of leniency to error or its author was unanimously voted a weakness; and the unmanly display only provoked derisive comment. The name of "Mutual Admiration Societies" is legion. The Essex Circle was never one of them.

I recall the names of not a few, dear in our church annals, who took an active and interesting part in the work of that very industrious association. Of those who have gone upward the names recur to me of James W. Putnam, Stillman Barden, Elbridge G. Brooks, E. W. Reynolds, Ira Washington. Of those yet living, I recall the familiar names of Ellis, Jewell, Reed, Talbot, Johnson, Moore, Guilford, and Case. Could the departed articulate their judgment, I am sure they would agree with the living in pronouncing Ebenezer

Fisher the soul of the Essex Ministerial Circle. In certain specialties of faculty and attainment others may have excelled him; but the talent which above all others is called into exercise by the work of such a body, was the talent in which it has often seemed to me he excelled all others whom I have ever intimately known. He was by pre-eminence a critic, and one who knew how to put a criticism into clear, pungent, incisive phraseology. Save as respects certain departments of thought for which he said he had but little talent, and in respect of which he certainly had no taste, he had an eye for a fallacy clear and acute beyond any of his associates. No rhetorical glitter ever misled his vision. He looked through clouds of verbiage and distinctly saw "the point." Many of the syllogisms which when ornately clothed and enunciated with emotion take captive the average listener, were instantly dissolved and exhibited in their naked weakness, when it became Mr. Fisher's turn to pass a judgment.

I recall many examples: here is one. The law just enacted made it a crime to feed or harbor the fugitive from slavery. The question was put thus: "Could a man with a heart in his body see the fleeing, panting slave, with the hound upon his track, struggling with the last vigor of breath and muscle to escape the man-hunter, — could a man with a heart in his body refuse such a poor mortal a cup of cold water and a crust of bread?" Mr. Fisher's reply was satisfactory enough to the essayist, but it included this: "The probability is

that there will be no bloodhound nor faltering footstep; the fugitive will probably come in the cars and expect a warm dinner!" Uniformly he brushed away the cobweb of emotional rhetoric, and directed his criticism to the literal situation. On one occasion, an attempt was made to vindicate God's ways by the familiar reasoning that if he *ordains* evil, he does so only to bring about some ulterior good. Mr. Fisher did not object to the general drift of the argument, but the word "ordains" seemed to him fallacious and of immoral import. His comment was: "In physics you may strike here in order to get an effect there; but in morals that method is suicidal. The very act is destructive of morals."

I recall an essay which built up in the usual order of logical sequence the doctrine that "God decrees whatsoever comes to pass," — in which ratiocination the power of the stronger motive was insisted upon as absolutely determining the subsequent act. Mr. Fisher's comment was: "Very good! The conclusion comes from the premises, and is unanswerable. But there is Brother ——," pointing to a champion of free-will who was present, "who can construct just as conclusive an argument, on premises just as palpable, for just the opposite theory. The truth is, each of these logical tubs must stand on its own bottom, and neither can get into the place of the other. How to adjust and harmonize the two I do not know, — I do not believe that anybody knows."

I remember an instance when the essayist introduced

a "gorgeous rainbow." Mr. Fisher's note upon it was, "As rainbows are usually gorgeous, the fact might be presumed; there is no occasion to state it." A somewhat radical brother, in alluding to a pastor in another denomination whose fidelity to temperance had produced a serious division, said of him, "He did a holy thing in breaking up that church." Mr. Fisher asked, "Do you mean to imply that he *meant* to break up the church? If he did, he is a very bad man. If he simply meant to preach the truth, and the truth happened to break up the church, that is a different case. But no man is a Christian who makes a business of breaking up churches."

I am not sure that I could not fill from memory a chapter of similar criticisms. He overflowed in the spontaneity of the criticising faculty. A pertinent comment seemed to shoot from his brain as an arrow from a fully bent bow. But the words of the criticism failed to give their full force. The manner of criticism was as much as the matter, — the manner was matter. It overawed. For the instant it left the object half paralyzed. There was a *tone* of power and of conclusiveness that made the word strangely impressive. The critic was the embodiment of character, and he spoke as one having authority. The wives of the ministers were always welcome, — indeed were expected. The frequent remark of the latest woman visitor was: "The essay appeared good till Mr. Fisher took hold of it, and then it seemed as if he left nothing of it!" In truth

it often so "seemed," even when a recuperative judgment was surprised to find that there was not sufficient reason for the seeming. It is a proverb that those who most freely give are the least willing to take. In the person of Mr. Fisher, the proverb did not hold. When his day came, he never failed to produce his essay and then take his seat in the "dock." Save, it may be, to correct an error of fact, he never interrupted the brother who might be "paying him back in kind." He would simply make a note of the comment, and then in patience wait. And if he could be severe upon an erring thinker, he could be equally severe upon himself as his own shortcomings were uncovered. No one ever saw him manifest the shadow of impatience, as one by one the brothers sought to lay bare vulnerable points in his effort. I have said that no favor was shown in the process of criticism. It was in this, the great and the peculiar merit of the Essex Circle, that Mr. Fisher had impressed thereupon his own identity.

Visiting clergymen, or those who might be in the vicinity on occasions of an exchange, were always invited to the hospitalities, literary and material, of the Circle. Hence the impression and the commanding ability of its most influential member became widely known. Strangers would return to their homes to tell what "a remarkable man they have in the Essex Circle." He became famed as a critic; and when, in another State, a man was wanted for the difficult and responsible office of training young men for the Christian ministry,

here was one tested and approved. The Canton Theological School was doubtless to be; but I very much doubt if it would have ever become the peculiarly successful institution it has now proved itself but for the Essex Ministerial Circle. In not a few vital regards, I am confident the school was that Circle "continued."

I am here tempted to relate an incident which, though not exactly pertaining to the Circle, is at least one of its adjuncts. The object of the Association was manifold. It included every practicable thing which could improve a minister in his general work. Hence, not alone the style, thought, and logic, but the elocution and gesture as well, were proper matters for criticism and amendment. In the particular of elocution, it was clear that something was needed besides pointing out defects. What to do and how to do were even more essential. Regret was often expressed that a suitable teacher was not available. At that time there were no schools of oratory, and experts in developing voice were not abundant.

One evening Mr. Fisher called to see me with most important news. A man highly recommended had presented himself, whose vocation it was to develop the "head voice," — that is, a voice which not only fills a room, but gives impetus to the articulated word. A more welcome visitor could not have been imagined. His business of sending a word like an arrow, of giving it "impact," of sending it "clear into the soul," — why, that was the primary condition of all effective speaking.

Mr. Fisher had full faith in the teacher: indeed he was accomplished in his art. A class made up of members of the Circle was at once found, and the manufacturer of orators was told to do his best. Such were the kindness and the catholicity of the class, that recruits from the Gentiles were admitted. Our number enlarged. I must here give no names, but out of that class came forth in due time a judge of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and also — wonderful to relate — the creator of a "new religion," now well known to fame in two continents!

It was in the contract that we should give ourselves for the time wholly up to the new business. Our teacher gave us daily an hour's lesson. In his absence we were expected to use all of our available time in "working the lesson in." The stereotyped injunction was, "You must ingrain it." He chose to say that both Mr. Fisher and myself would succeed admirably in this art of giving thought the coveted "impetus;" and he suggested for our frequent exercise a particular selection from Shakspeare.

The exercise was a boisterous one, and it called for not a little physical demonstration. Where could we go to be out of sight and hearing? Mr. Fisher suggested that we should make available the out-of-the-way and spacious Universalist church — the one of which he was pastor. Accordingly we — he and myself — met there often. We took possession of the middle aisle; and, as there could be no one to see and hear, we could try the "impact" and "impetus" without let or hin-

derance. Matters went on nicely. I saw great improvement in my companion: he saw no less in me. And there was no "one to dispute."

But — such are the mishaps that may befall all human schemes — a bit of scandal got out upon the streets of quiet old Salem, to the effect that two Universalist ministers had been quarrelling in the Universalist church; that words between them were high and threatening; that each ran to the other shaking his fist; and, by way of specification, it was added that one said to the other, "You will be sorry for this;" and, further, one called the other a "rascal."

The explanation was soon discovered. It seemed that the "impact" of our enunciation had passed through windows and shutters. Certain boys, curious to know what was going on in the usually quiet sanctuary, had climbed to the window-sill, and, peering through the shutter, not only heard a few words of our declamation, but saw gesticulating accompaniments. At once they ran and spread the rumor of an encounter in the church between two infuriated Universalist ministers!

As for the specification that one accused the other of doing something he would be sorry for, a few lines of the exercise our teacher had selected for our "drill" will give the needed light. It was the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, from the fourth act of "Julius Cæsar." My part was that of Cassius; Mr. Fisher's was Brutus. Under the instructions, Cassius was to

take a position at some distance from Brutus, and rapidly move towards him, making a threatening gesticulation, and say : —

> " Do not presume too much upon my love ;
> I may do that I *shall be sorry for.*"

Then Brutus retorts : —

> " You *have* done that *you should be sorry for.*
> There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats ;
> For I am armed so strong in honesty,
> That they pass by me as the idle wind,
> Which I respect not."

Brutus then proceeds to enumerate certain favors he had besought of Cassius, which the latter " denied " him, — among other things, " gold to pay his legions ; " and he breaks out, with proper physical action : —

> " Was that done like Cassius ?
> Should I have answered Caius Cassius so ?
> When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous,
> To lock such *rascal* counters from his friends,
> Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts,
> Dash him to pieces ! "

Our teacher had been particular to explain that, in order to give due effect to " the rascal," the " r " must be " rolled with a rasping or grating accent," and the enunciation of " Dash him to pieces ! " must suit the action to the words. Those who knew Mr. Fisher, remembering his large frame and heavy voice, can well understand that the impersonation to eyes and ears which could not take in the whole, must have been misinterpreted. Neither the " Cassius " nor the " Brutus " suffered from the scandal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASTORATE AT SOUTH DEDHAM.

Treated by Dr. Warren. — Rapid Improvement. — Able again to preach. — The South Dedham Parish. — Its Temperance Record. — Mr. Fisher's happy Pastorate. — His Success. — A Call that was a Command. — The Command obeyed.

VERY fortunate was Mr. Fisher in securing the service of an experienced, skilful, and faithful physician, — Dr. Warren of Boston. Throat disease was his specialty. The ailment of his patient he pronounced laryngitis. Before his resignation in Salem, he had put himself under Dr. Warren's advice; and the advice was not to think of remaining in a position where the duty of public speaking in a large church edifice must be so severe a strain upon the throat. It was his advice that proved most effective in determining him to seek release from a very arduous pastorate. The skilful and repeated application of some caustic gave him great relief. His physician did not deem his illness so serious as to give occasion for alarm. The recovery, though perhaps never complete, was rapid. A short time after beginning the treatment, I met him in the store of Abel Tompkins, one of the leading Universalist book-publishers, on Cornhill. He approached me with

unusual elasticity, and in a tone of much relief said: "I think Dr. Warren fully understands my case. I believe he will cure me. I am making rapid progress. I feel once more like preaching." His confidence was well founded. Unless the heart disease which many years after proved fatal was but a remote development of the difficulty, he substantially recovered, — so much so that he was able to carry successfully through great difficulties that triumphant enterprise which, by distinction, was the work of his life. Strange to remember that just at the period when he feared his work was done, his great work was really to begin!

The parish in South Dedham (afterwards Norwood) was great in character, but small in numbers. The church was small; the neighborhood was not large. The duties could not by any necessity be very exacting. It was just the position in which a minister recovering from illness might be able to labor without detriment. Almost by instinct, the South Dedham people saw their great opportunity. Mr. Fisher felt that the opening was almost a special providence. In the month of November, 1853, he was in due form the pastor of the South Dedham Universalist Church. The result justified every expectation. The pastor grew in health, and the parish grew in numbers and in influence. The Honorable Joseph Day, of the parish committee, who appreciated and loved his minister, once said to me: "Mr. Fisher's sickness was overruled for good to us. But for that we never could have had such a minister."

In his new home, the pastor was not only content: he was happy. He had the full confidence, the full sympathy, the full co-operation of the whole parish, — it seems hardly an exaggeration to say, of the whole community. The town was proud of him. To the church he was a tower of strength. Devoted, heart, mind, and hand, to the cause of temperance, it soothed and strengthened him to find the people entirely with him, not simply to approve, but to second all his endeavors in the sacred reform.

Many years before, the Rev. Edwin Thompson, at the time pastor of the South Dedham parish, made one of his characteristic attacks upon the rum traffic. Genial in soul, never irritating any one, always hopeful, but as inflexible of purpose as an apostle, he had put his hand to the plough not to look back. He converted all who had need of conversion; he confirmed the wavering and strengthened the weak; he put the parish upon the foundation of the gospel of sobriety. From that day to the present it has never wavered. From that day till now it has been a leading influence in the temperance work of Norfolk county and of the State. Mr. Fisher was both happy and grateful that he could step into the good work which Mr. Thompson many years before had begun.

The affairs of the parish were carefully attended to. The church grew in numbers and in power. The finances were "brought up." So happy were the people of the parish that, for a period of little more than four years,

all the interests of the church went smoothly as a marriage bell. The Rev. George Hill, in the memorial discourse already referred to as preached in the Norwood church, has tersely and comprehensively summarized the history of South Dedham settlement. He says : —

" At the end of six years' hard labor, his voice gave way, and he was obliged to resign his charge in Salem, and seek rest and attend to his health. He feared at one time that he should be obliged to give up his profession ; but his strong constitution saved him, so that in a few months he felt strong enough to take charge of a small society in the country, where out-of-door exercise might be combined with the work of the ministry. South Dedham presented such an opening ; and, receiving a unanimous call, he came here in the fall of 1853, and commenced his labors as your pastor, preaching in the little old church which preceded this. You know his history here, and how much, under God, he was permitted to do to advance our faith in this place. He soon regained his health, and took an active part in the growth and welfare of all the material and spiritual interests of the village. He attracted people by his earnest sincerity ; he convinced them by his broad views of the divine government and his irresistible logic ; he made friends by his kindly intercourse, — and very soon became the leading clergyman in the place. The society began to grow, not only in numbers and financial ability, but in moral and religious power and influence. The Sunday school took a new start, a church was organized, and the spiritual force of Universalism was brought to your minds as it probably never had been presented before. His moral influence was a tower of strength among you. He was on the side of education, temperance, antislavery, — showing that Universalism included all the great practical reforms of the age, — and was the friend of man in all

his needs and under all his disabilities. He did grand work for you, leaving a name and an influence which are still fresh and potent in your midst."

I have made reference to the coincidence that, in his providential call to South Dedham, Mr. Fisher had simply gone back to the home of his ancestors. I have quoted Mr. Hill on this point. He further says: "The late Ebenezer Fisher Gay, as also Ebenezer Fisher, D.D., and E. F. Talbot, were named for a great-uncle of Dr. Fisher, being descendants on the mother's side." Both Mr. Gay and Mr. Talbot were active members of the South Dedham parish. Mr. Fisher, therefore, had the peculiar happiness of being connected as a pastor with his kindred.

I have said that in this country pastorate Mr. Fisher found every thing to his wish, and he was fully content. Had his object been to seek no other than his personal comfort, he never could have been induced to forsake the peaceful abode. But God had raised up this giant Saul for a distinct mission. Ebenezer Fisher never thought of personal comfort when the Divine call came to him. Satisfied that duty pointed in any direction, no matter how hard the road to be travelled, how trying the ordeal in store, he obeyed. In the month of January, 1858, Mr. Fisher was summoned to a position as yet untried by any one, — a position for which nature and grace had given him great qualifications. He was satisfied that the new call was a divine command. He obeyed. The special work of his useful career was to

begin, and for about twenty years it was carried forward without a halt, and through obstacles at times disheartening, to a degree of success hardly anticipated. I turn aside from the biographical part of this history to prepare the way for an intelligible presentation of the career at Canton.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNIVERSALIST MOVEMENT.

Two Classes of Denominations. — The One a Movement in the Mass. — The Other the Accretion of scattered Individuals. — Examples. — Church of England. — The Unitarian. — The Methodist. — The Congregationalist. — The Universalist. — A Gathering of separate Individuals. — Therefore started with Nothing. What it has, its own Creation. — The institutional Epoch. — The practical Question. — How it has been Answered. — The hard Struggle. — The Victory.

A CORRECT history of religious denominations very soon divides these into two classes, — those in which men have changed their belief and ecclesiastical relations in *masses*, and those in which the change has been *individual*. I must make this distinction clear. In the one case some edict — an official proclamation or a majority vote — decrees that the organism with all its property, which has stood for a particular theology and form of worship, shall henceforth stand for a different, it may be an opposite, theology and form of worship. In the other case, individuals are separately converted from other beliefs: they spontaneously come into new relations, and take a new name, and profess new convictions; and they do this *as* individuals, and they come from different quarters and from

different associations. For example, we may suppose (I do not know that such a case ever occurred) that the majority having the management of a Presbyterian church — one that has acquired property in the form of church, chapel, and parsonage — votes to become Baptist, and to bring with it all its possessions into the Baptist denomination. That would be a change in the mass. Or suppose (what has frequently been the case) that one person who had been Presbyterian, another who had been Methodist, another who had been Episcopalian, and another who had been Unitarian, were each to become Baptist and to unite in forming a Baptist church. That would be simply an individual change. Each would bring himself or herself, and there would be no church property to transfer.

The first Christian churches were composed of converts who had come, in this separate, individual way, into the Christian faith. No edict, or statute, or vote transferred the synagogues, with all their equipments, into churches. With rare exceptions, the Congregational churches of New England had the same kind of origin; so had the Methodist, and so had the Universalist.

It must be confessed that the new ecclesiastical organisms, which were but older ones transformed, had certain apparent advantages. As the edict or vote took the ecclesiastical property along with the church, the new organism had its churches, parsonages, educated clergy often, and all the outfit, *at its start*. The

late O. A. Brownson never wearied in telling the Church of England — and there was a cutting emphasis in the telling — that its splendid cathedrals, abbeys, and churches were in literal truth but so many thefts. Henry VIII. and Archbishop Cranmer began by stealing that which Catholic sacrifice and consecration had constructed. Henry and his cohorts, Mr. Brownson said, were robbers of churches. The Establishment was but a colossal robber. Most of the early Unitarian churches of New England came in the mass. Orthodox churches were voted Unitarian, and that which had been Orthodox property — the fruit of Orthodox toil, its gifts to the Lord — passed into new and hostile hands. A judicial decision pronounced the parish, which anybody might join, the legal body and custodian of the property, the sacramental service alone excepted. The law knew nothing of the church which only certain ones could join. A majority of one in the parish could therefore dispossess a church which might be a unit against the transformation. The Orthodox Congregationalists made bitter complaints against what they deemed a sacrilege and a robbery under the forms and the protection of a judicial decree. I am not now to argue the ethical merits of these parish votes by which churches were dispossessed. My sole purpose, in the sketch or description which I have given, is to account for and emphasize the fact that the Universalist denomination here in the United States *began with nothing*. Save in a few cases, and these at a later period, no authoritative

parish vote put it into possession of church edifices, church parsonages, and church schools. It might, in the language of the ritual somewhat modified, say, "I brought nothing into the world with me." Of every equipment it was naked. It had no clergy, save in the few cases where individual clergymen of other sects became converts to its tenets, and voluntarily came forward to give to their advocacy the benefit of their culture. Like the Methodist, the Universalist depended for its clergy upon the zealous and conscientious men who gave themselves to the cause, — gave what they had, — and this, as a somewhat general rule, was such learning as they had "picked up," and such preparations as a diligent and independent study of the Word had matured. So the Universalist movement started in poverty, — without church, academy, college, or theological school. Mr. Brownson, with a side-meaning whereof I here make no account, would have said that the Universalist movement was at least an honest one. It robbed no other sect. In truth, from foundation to turret, the Universalist church in America has made, earned, and paid for, whatever it now has.

I confess that I record this fact of the poverty of the denomination with pride. I would not have the fact otherwise than as history records it. In the year 1843, General Lewis Cass, a leading statesman of that day, delivered a political speech in Cleveland, Ohio. I heard the speech, but remember only a single passage, which may be aptly cited in this connection. He referred to

the "Log Cabin" argument, which did so much in 1840 to put General Harrison into the White House. General Cass said: "It is nothing against a man — on the contrary it is something to his credit — *to begin* with a log cabin; but it is much against him if he stays a long time in it. I began my domestic career in a log cabin. I am proud to say that I had enterprise enough to get into something better in no great length of time."

The Universalists began by preaching in private houses, in barns, in groves, or in halls temporarily hired. They began with such an equipment of preachers as they could extemporize. Save in the few cases where educated ministers were converted from other beliefs, they relied upon whatever talent and whatever attainments might offer themselves, insisting only that the preacher should be zealous and faithful, and preach from the Sacred Word. The preacher, therefore, with an occasional exception, was not an educated man in any higher sense of the word. This was the "log cabin" epoch, the pioneer epoch, the poor epoch, in the Universalist movement in America. With the celebrated statesman whom I have named, but with a slight modification in the applying of his words, I would say: "It was nothing against — it was, rather, much to the credit of — the Universalist denomination that it began with its log cabin; but it would have been much against the denomination to have perpetually remained therein."

To retain the metaphor, the question in due time

came, "Will the Universalists have enterprise enough to quit the 'cabin' for the 'framed house'?" This question introduces what has been aptly designated the Institutional epoch of the Universalist movement. Finding the academies under hostile sectarian influences, whereby the children of Universalist parents educated therein are insidiously won from the faith of their parents, will the Universalists have academies of their own, and so protect their young from adverse creeds? Finding the colleges for the most part under the auspices of the Calvinistic sects, will the Universalists endow their own higher institutions of learning, and make them potential in shielding the minds and hearts of young men against the enemies of their faith? And will they take the great, the indispensable precaution of securing an educating clergy, — a body in which they may take an honest pride, on which they may depend when prejudice, false interpretations of Scripture, and Pharisaic hate, shall assail the faith that was first delivered to the saints? The several questions are included in one: "Will the Universalist denomination see that the institutions are absolutely indispensable if it is to have a future, and will it rise to the responsibility?" This question may take a different verbal form, with its meaning unchanged: "Will the Universalist communion have a sufficient conviction of the truth of its principles, and also of the practical value of these principles to quicken and sustain the enterprise of securing the indispensable equipments?"

I am describing the career of one who, in the period of twenty-one years of hard service, did a lion's share in the introduction of an Institutional epoch into the Universalist church. To appreciate his great work, it is needful that we have before us the "situation," — to use an expressive word, the particular meaning of which was too clear during the anxieties and uncertainties of the recent national struggle. Just what was the status of the Universalist church in 1858, the year of Mr. Fisher's call to Canton? In the matter of schools, of institutions, what were the antecedents? What had been done? What yet remained to be accomplished? Of the chain of causes which have brought the Universalist church to its present position, — which, though yet sufficiently imperfect, in many things a promise rather than a realization, has at least the apparent pledge of a future, — what link did Ebenezer Fisher forge, and just where in the chain shall we look for that link?

In his centennial sermon, preached before the General Convention of Universalists at the hundredth anniversary of the denomination, in September, 1870, the Rev. A. A. Miner, D.D., who certainly had earned the right to give the history of the denomination in this matter of its institutions, says: —

"At that time [1840] we had no colleges, no divinity schools, no well-endowed academies. Westbrook Seminary, in Maine, incorporated in 1830; Clinton Liberal Institute, in New York, founded in 1832; with the Orleans Liberal Institute, at

Glover, Vermont ; and the Green Mountain Institute, at South Woodstock, Vermont, — which severally were but feebly, if at all, endowed, — were all the institutions of learning we could boast.

"As early as 1814, a seminary was projected ; and in the three or four following years committees were enjoined to raise the sum of five thousand dollars to carry the project into effect. Nothing, however, was accomplished. Various other enterprises were meditated from time to time, but were either never started, or came to a premature end.

"But about twenty years ago, almost simultaneously east and west, there were put forth well-considered efforts for the founding of higher institutions of learning. The immediate results, after much toil, were Lombard University, in the West, and Tufts College, in the East, both but meagrely endowed. A new impulse, however, seemed almost at once to move our whole Church, and its fruits have been most happy.

"St. Lawrence University, with its two professional schools in northern New York ; Dean Academy, with its magnificent endowment, in Massachusetts ; Jefferson Institute, with its elegant edifice, in Wisconsin ; Green Mountain Central Institute, with its solid and commodious structure, in Vermont ; Smithson College, handsomely begun, in Indiana ; Buchtel College, so munificently assured by Hon. John R. Buchtel, in Ohio ; and the strengthening every way of institutions previously established, — are the remoter results and the prophecy of a better day for our Church.

"Now we number not less than seven academies, five colleges, established and establishing ; three professional schools, two of divinity and one of law, possessing an aggregate property of not less than two millions of dollars.

"Fifty years ago our whole Church stood appalled by the proposition to raise five thousand dollars for educational purposes. Now we have two millions invested and employed to the same end. Twenty years ago, some of our wisest men were

in grave doubt whether in all our land we could raise a hundred thousand dollars for the founding of a college. Not only was this accomplished, but there has been contributed, for the same general purpose, an average of a hundred thousand dollars *a year* ever since ; and in our centenary period alone we are proposing to raise millions. Surely, 'to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.'"

The unlooked-for contingency of a great conflagration in one instance, and of financial shrinkages as incidents of the hard times since 1872, — events which human wisdom could not foresee in 1870, — would compel something of a modification of this general statement if to be made in 1880. Yet the statement is largely true even now, and it succinctly meets the question how the responsibilities of the institutional epoch have been met. And it will also give me an opportunity to designate in the proper connection Ebenezer Fisher's place and part in the great enterprise. I will so far anticipate as to say that in 1870, when the centennial sermon was preached, Dr. Fisher was in the thirteenth year of his labors in the Theological School at Canton, New York, and just one year before that date, an extra endowment had placed the school not by any means upon an affluent or sufficient, but a secure, foundation.

I must warn the reader, who may not be informed in the details of this history, against the inference or the impression that the results which are epitomized in this extract from the centennial Sermon were other than the fruits of persistent, painful, at times extremely

anxious endeavors of the few, exhorting and urging the many. No: it is the old story. Not on a flowery bed were the leaders of this institutional epoch of Universalism borne in triumph to the end they sought, — the leaders of institutions which depend upon individual offerings seldom are. Moses, in leading the Israelites out of the house of bondage, found his chief obstacles not in the hostility of the Amalekites and Ammonites, but in the indifference, inappreciation, faltering faith, of his own people. In Frothingham's "Siege of Boston," — the most detailed and the most instructive chapter of American history yet written, — the fact which chiefly impresses me is the painful one that the Revolution was the work of a few, and this work consisting mainly in conquering the lukewarmness of the many. The great Washington was great in no other trait of his character so much as in the courage and the hope with which he resisted the apathy of those on whom he had a right to depend.

I must not say that in the achievements of the Universalist people in America, they went with alacrity to their work. Such a statement would contradict the general tenor of history. The treasure of the faith was in earthen vessels. Here as in other historic evolutions the few not simply led, but almost constrained the many.

In the fall of 1850, I for a few days accompanied the late Rev. Dr. Otis A. Skinner in his efforts to raise money in Essex County for Tufts College. That was,

it may be remembered, the date I have fixed upon as designating the pivotal one which began the missionary and institutional epoch of the Universalist denomination. At that date, it was a new thing to ask the Universalist people to contribute for church enterprises other than those of the parish, and the momentum of habit was strong. I felt in its fulness, almost in its bitterness, the truth of Mr. Skinner's words to me in view of the difficulties and the slow progress: "You see that to every person I call upon I have to give the entire argument; then have to wait a long time for him to make up his mind; and then he thinks he has done something generous if he subscribes ten dollars!" It was discovered that giving is a habit, — an acquired talent, — and that hardly any attainment needs more of educating or developing. I have heard the Rev. Dr. Dolphus Skinner tell how hard he worked, and how much he suffered in body as well as in mind, walking the streets of New York, in an effort to raise a few thousand dollars to meet a crisis in the Clinton Liberal Institute. In all efforts for the general good, the rule is that the cross comes before the crown. The able, faithful, and consecrated men of the Universalist denomination had, yet have, no exceptional experience in this regard. The kingdom has been taken with violence; it has been entered through much tribulation. But despite the bitterness of hope deferred, the pain of anxious solicitude, the gnawing sense of inexcusable neglect, the constant reminder of the proverb, "Out of

sight, out of mind," in which griefs Dr. Fisher had a full share, — fidelity has generally been rewarded at last. The time comes when the strange apathy yields, when the sense of personal responsibility is quickened, and the victory comes. The pioneers of the universities, schools, and colleges have so found it. It was at last Dr. Fisher's reward and his joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST EFFORTS TO FOUND A THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL.

First Educational Movements not Specific. — The Result a Development rather than a Creation. — T. J. Sawyer and H. Ballou, 2d. — An Issue forced. — Sept. 3, 1845. — The Clinton Class. — The Substantial Success. — The Attention of the People secured. — Tufts College. — New York Convention of 1850. — Convention of 1852. — An Education Society. — Board of Trustees. — Heroic Record. — Success of the Education Society.

THE earlier agitations and schemes which at last gave the Universalist denomination colleges and theological schools can hardly be said to have pursued any very definite plan, or to have aimed at any sharply specified end. The feeling that moved the leading men was generally that of the need of greater educational facilities in the work of the denomination. Some gave special thought to schools which, under Universalist auspices, should be safe for the children of Universalist parents. This thought included colleges and academies. Others gave heed to the pressing exigency, — the need of systematic training for the ministry. Out of this ultimately came the existing theological schools. The "plans and specifications" were afterthoughts; they came as the development of the educational spirit

made them needful. But at the outset there was no particular form of the educational enterprise; and, while all worked together for institutions, the brethren began to divide (though not at first to differ) as to the specific character of the institution. I learn — indeed, I remember — that the necessity of a better-educated ministry was the dominant feeling and conviction; and with the mass of the Universalist people better education meant better qualified ministers. In fact, the first formal action which resulted in founding Tufts College had at the time the *intent* of founding a theological school. And years after Tufts was opened, it was difficult to disabuse the Universalist public mind as to the exclusiveness of its literary character. Very many of the laity supposed that it was a divinity school, and that all the young men in it were there fitting for the ministry!

To use terms with what is defined as "scientific precision," I should say that the schools now under Universalist auspices were developments rather than creations. The initial idea, the root of purpose, was that of securing for the denomination the facilities and the power which come of the higher education. So much was clear and definite. The special forms which awaited that initial intent were discovered rather than anticipated. They came of contingencies and circumstances rather than from a comprehensive purpose outlined at the beginning. I must add that the process of this unfolding caused personal regrets, local preju-

dices, in some respects injudicious divisions, among the brethren. There were a New York movement and a New England movement, harmonious in the general interest, but not wholly in accord as the several enterprises took a "local" habitation and a specific "name."

The Canton Theological School is the first that properly has a title to the name under Universalist auspices. Yet, as I have but just stated, the need of some preparation for the pulpit more regular and systematic than that of studying with some minister had long been felt. As long ago as the year 1843, at the session of the General Convention of Universalists at Akron, Ohio, the Rev. Thomas J. Sawyer, in a sermon before that body, in sadness complained that so many had literally leaped from the blacksmith's forge into the pulpit. To be sincere, in earnest, strong in argument, and devoted to the cause, — primary and indispensable conditions indeed, — were of themselves most inadequate qualifications for preaching the gospel. A practical man would not intrust the shoeing of his horse to one who had not learned the trade. In a strict yet high meaning of that word, should the preaching of the gospel and the discharging of pastoral duties be intrusted to one who has received no mental outfit for a skilful and safe assuming of the sacred responsibility? The Rev. Hosea Ballou, 2d, of Medford, Mass., from whom several ministers had received such instructions as can be given at irregular hours in a pastor's study, felt the

necessity of a more thorough and systematic training not less keenly than his New York co-laborer. And a few laymen were in full sympathy with them as to the exigency. The feeling deepened in their minds till they felt that something at least approximating a school for training ministers *must* be attempted. What I will venture to designate as the initial act bears date Sept. 3, 1845.

The pastor of the New York Orchard Street Church, whose sermon at Akron I have just referred to, became literally restless in view of the growing, ever-threatening need, to meet which no active or formal steps were taken. He therefore determined upon action. He and his brethren had talked much; now he would *do* something. Literally he forced a crisis. With the approving advice of influential brethren, and with at least the intimation that his hands should be upheld in what he proposed, he resigned his pastoral charge in New York, and this to the profound grief of a people who loved and cherished him as few pastors are ever loved and cherished. On the date named (Sept. 3, 1845), he took the Principalship of the Liberal Institute at Clinton, New York, founded largely through the instrumentality of the Rev. Stephen R. Smith, in 1832. His plan included that of a theological class, to which he would devote two hours of each school day. The salary for this special service was to be five hundred dollars a year, to secure which it was proposed to raise a permanent fund of ten thousand dollars. In the mean time

dependence was to be placed upon five-dollar subscriptions, and the contributions of the parishes. The ultimate intention was that Hosea Ballou, 2d, should be the head of a theological school, of which this class was to be the nucleus. This action of the New York pastor seemed like the self-forgetfulness and the courage of the forlorn hope. In leaving an assured position, — strong almost beyond precedent in the affections of a parish that was literally his own creation, — and a good and certain salary, for an experiment, and one which, even if successful, must bring special hardship and a scanty support, Dr. Sawyer gave an example of personal sacrifice for a principle that has few parallels in his, in any, denomination. Gratefully I make the record in this humble endeavor justly to record the potential antecedents of the Canton School. I anticipate to add that though the plan was not in form and name wholly successful, it was virtually and in effect very successful. It gave the Universalist ministry in all out of thirty-eight students, twenty-nine ministers, most of whom have proved faithful and efficient, not a small proportion being in active service in the Universalist ministry to this day. Yes, better; it literally put the general enterprise before the eyes of the people; it compelled them at least to take a position; it led to what was not contemplated, the institution over which, in subsequent years, Ebenezer Fisher was to preside, with the results soon to be detailed.

I have said that Dr. Sawyer's action forced an issue.

This is literally the fact. While he was engaged with the theological class, — a period of about seven years, — conventions, associations, and special meetings were taking the matter up in form, — at first with but little immediate effect, then with encouraging results, finally with the prestige of assured success. Resolutions, committees, and agencies followed the Clinton experiment, nominally and intentionally to sustain and improve it; though, as I have before intimated, to bear fruit in other forms and in other communities. I much regret that my rapidly filling pages compel me to summarize in the briefest statement a large number of facts bearing upon the one enterprise which for a decade literally monopolized the attention of the New York Universalists, particularly in their ecclesiastical gatherings. Hardly any other matter was thought of or talked about. Committees were appointed, special meetings were held, stirring circulars were sent out, subscriptions were taken, — all with the same general intent. At the New York Convention of 1850, a committee on education reported in some detail, mainly in regard to the Clinton class, but incidentally in regard to the general project of education under the auspices of the denomination. At the session of 1851, Rev. E. Francis, for a committee on the Theological School, reported progress, and the Clinton class was still the end immediately in view. This report was followed by the appointment of a committee of five, — Revs. E. Francis, G. W. Montgomery, J. M. Austin, R. Eddy, and Job Potter, — to

consider the whole matter of education, literary and theological, in the State. At the session of 1852, this committee reported progress, one item having reference to Dr. Sawyer's work at Clinton. But what, in view of the result, must now be rated as the principal feature, was the plan for an Education Society. This was submitted to a special committee, — Mr. George E. Baker, Rev. J. C. Waldo, Rev. Pitt Morse. This committee acted promptly during a recess of the Convention, and the Education Society was organized, with the following as a Board of Trustees: T. J. Sawyer, Jacob Harsen, Martin Thatcher, E. Francis, Grove Penny, O. Hutchinson, C. C. Gordon, C. L. Stickney, Philo Price, R. F. Clark, Marinus Hubbard, G. W. Montgomery, W. S. Balch, George E. Baker, J. M. Austin, Josiah Barber. I must, and most reluctantly, pass by the many votes and plans and acts of the new Society. It must suffice if I say that the determination with which obstacles were uniformly resisted was not simply commendable, it was heroic. It gave the proof that the cause was in the hands of a people who would "know no such word as fail." Disappointment, instead of disheartening, only stimulated to renewed endeavor. Success was merited: success was now to be the reward.

That Education Society was in earnest. It was determined that something should be done. By almost direct action it established and equipped the school to which Ebenezer Fisher was called.

CHAPTER IX.

THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL ESTABLISHED.

Feeling the Way. — The Question of Funds. — Rev. E. Francis appointed to Canvass for Funds. — Rev. J. T. Goodrich also. — Education Meeting in New York. — Jacob Harsen's Pledge. — The Minimum Fund. — Convention of 1853. — Agent's Report. — Convention of 1854. — Success Assured. — An important Committee appointed. — Proposals and Conditions. — Canton fixed upon. — A Building Committee. — Advantages and Disadvantages of the Location. — The Addition of a College Suggested. — Meets with Local Favor. — The Incorporation of St. Lawrence University. — Corporate Trustees. — Laying the Corner-Stone. — State Endowment for the College. — The Building made over to the Trustees.

UNDER the auspices of the New York Convention, the whole enterprise of the Theological School was now in the hands of the Education Society, — directly in those of its Board of Trustees. This Board met in New York in September, 1852. It took action in regard to Dr. Sawyer's Clinton Class, with what success has been disclosed in the fact that in that year that gentleman closed his work in Clinton. In all of the varied and successive attempts, there was a "feeling of the way," — an attempt to hit upon *some* method that should promise stable results. But there was con-

centration and specific plan in one regard. At every meeting of the brethren, under whatever auspices, the primary condition of funds was kept in view. No reports were so vital in interest as those from the treasurer.

The Society, with the least possible delay (inevitably there was some delay), put financial agents in the field. The Rev. Richard Eddy had been so active and so effective in his clerical service, that he was at once designated for the important trust of securing subscriptions. But his parish engagements made it impossible for him to accept. The Rev. E. Francis was induced to resign his pastorate in Utica, in April, 1853, and start out with the subscription-book. He was the pioneer canvasser, under the direction of the Education Society. He at once began the never very pleasant enterprise. The "Ambassador" (the State denominational paper), Dr. Sawyer, and others, gave him a public indorsement, and entreated the Universalist people throughout the State, and wherever else he might go, to give him a cordial greeting. He was "to raise means to found and endow a respectable theological seminary," and "also obtain members, annual and life. of the Society." Dr. Sawyer said: "An earnest effort is to be made to accomplish what has been too long neglected, — the establishment of a respectable theological school. With what success our endeavors are to be attended, time alone can determine. God grant that our highest hopes may be realized."

Early in January, 1854, the trustees appointed the Rev. J. T. Goodrich a canvassing agent, who served in that capacity at different times for quite a long period, and who met, it is but just to record, with special success. In June, 1853, a public meeting was held in New York, in the Broadway (Dr. Chapin's) Church, to cooperate with and further the work of the Education Society. At this meeting, held so soon after the Convention at Hudson, and before the Education Society had been able to do much more than "look around," the announcement that at least a good beginning had been made towards the fund gave encouragement. The total sum, though small, seemed actually large in its promise, and it gave no little zest to the meeting. This, it must be remembered, was before there had been any training in the art of giving. At this meeting, Dr. Sawyer had the pleasure of announcing that the will of Mrs. Magdalen Ritter Halsted, of New York, bequeathed to the purposes of the Education Society one thousand dollars. Rev. W. S. Balch, F. C. Havemeyer, and Jacob Harsen, were made a Committee of Finance for investing and holding such funds as might be raised. Resolutions directly bearing on the enterprise were discussed and adopted. Over two thousand one hundred dollars were pledged by individuals present. One gentleman (Jacob Harsen, of the Bleecker Street Church, New York) gave a pledge of five thousand dollars on the condition that twenty-five thousand dollars were raised from other parties, — which pledge he subsequently

changed to that of one thousand dollars for every five thousand dollars from other parties. His pastor at the time, Rev. W. S. Balch, writes me that this offer was really the incipient stage of the whole enterprise. It made the school possible; and this, under the circumstances, was equivalent to a certainty. Dr. Sawyer, who was appointed a committee to prepare a report in relation to the Theological School, at this meeting, performed the duty assigned. He published it in the "Christian Ambassador" for June 18, 1853, in which he considered at length, first, the "necessity," and, second, the practicability, of the enterprise.

The Convention was held at Lockport, in August, 1853. The Education Society held its first annual meeting on Wednesday afternoon, Aug. 24, when the secretary, Hon. George E. Baker, read his annual report; and the treasurer and travelling agent, Rev. Mr. Francis, gave a report on the state of the finances and his success in soliciting. Speeches were made by Revs. W. S. Balch, H. R. Nye, and J. M. Austin. Six hundred dollars were at once pledged. The agent, Rev. Mr. Francis, stated that he had been as successful as was anticipated; that in most of the places he had visited the friends were not prepared to subscribe, since they had not made it a thing of deliberate consideration. They had never before been appealed to *personally*. Again, in many instances they preferred to wait till another season of the year: summer was the time when they were the least able to contribute.

At the session of the Convention held in Auburn, in 1854, it appeared that sixteen thousand dollars had been pledged. At a special meeting held in New York, Nov. 28, the same year, the amount had nominally — the result proved that it was not fully — reached twenty thousand dollars.

But success was an assured fact, and hence a most important committee was appointed, consisting of Rev. W. S. Balch, F. C. Havemeyer, and Norman Van Nostrand, to take charge of the whole enterprise, devise ways and means, and locate the Theological School. They issued proposals on the condition that, "other things being equal, that place which would do the most for the institution should receive the preference." Applications were made from Canton, Perry, Clinton, Cazenovia, Cortlandville, Newark, and some other towns. They raised what they could, and laid the result before the committee, who took the pains to visit and examine most of the places personally. The "conditions" which they took into consideration were accessibility, healthiness, and the state of the cause in the town and regions round about. Two offered strong inducements, — Perry and Canton. The committee determined to allow no prejudice of place or people to influence their judgment. Perry offered twenty acres of land and seven thousand dollars, with the prospect of increasing it to ten thousand dollars. Canton offered twenty acres of land and fifteen thousand dollars, which was afterwards increased to twenty-one thousand dollars.

At the annual meeting of the Education Society, Aug. 29, 1855, at Utica, this committee made a report, and the trustees were authorized to make the selection. They conferred their power upon the same committee, who finally announced, Jan. 5, 1856, that they had decided upon Canton as the location of the school, since it had offered the best inducements. Rev. W. S. Balch, Norman Van Nostrand, and Thomas Wallace, were appointed a committee to erect the building.

It will be noted that all the action taken by the Education Society pertained exclusively to the Theological School. It has been stated that the votes passed at the meeting in New York, originating the movement that sent out Rev. O. A. Skinner to canvass for the establishing of a college, contemplated the location of the college in the valley of the Mohawk or Hudson; and the Theological School, to be at Walnut Hill (now College Hill), near Boston. When it was determined to put the college at the latter place, many of the New York people, disappointed in the turn the enterprise took, felt that it should be their special province to seek the establishing of the Theological School in their own State. The Education Society made this enterprise its special object, with what success has now been described.

The Rev. William S. Balch writes me to the same effect, adding a new item: "The people of Canton and vicinity had donated twenty acres of land and fifteen thousand dollars for the erection of a suitable building.

It was designed, and a portion of the original fund was given, on condition that manual labor of two hours each working-day should form a part of its curriculum."

As to the fitness of the site, there were two sides. Canton is not in what can properly be called a Universalist neighborhood. It was remote from the strong parishes whose sympathy and interest it was quite essential should be quickened. It was literally "out of sight:" the rest of the adage might be expected to hold true. In the two particulars of endowment and of the sympathy of the brethren at large, the centre of New York city had been much better than Canton, on the far-off and isolated border. But the other side is also strong: as I reflect and recall some memories, I incline to the belief that it was the stronger. Canton was and is away from the city temptations so serious to young men. It was away from diversions. There was nothing to compete with the studies and the discipline of the school. It is almost impossible to over-estimate the worth of this single consideration. And the means of living were and are relatively cheap. In striking the average of argument, I am not sure but that Canton had pre-eminent claims as the best site for the enterprise.

It must not be inferred that Canton was or is an obscure country village. It is the county seat of St. Lawrence county. It is a compact town, with a court house, a large hotel, and a business street crowded with stores. In the near vicinity, there are several mills and factories. The "Gazetteer" sets the population of the

town, for 1854, as fifteen hundred; of the township as about forty-five hundred. Hence there is ample "society," and all the conveniences of town life. Still, it is not a city, either in size or character. It is not near a city, Ogdensburg, some twenty miles distant, being the nearest, at least of much size.

I have explained that the prospect of a college was not even entertained by the New York brethren; that all the plans, propositions, and funds raised and contemplated had exclusive reference to the seminary for the educating of young men for the ministry.

As another example of the development character of the general enterprise, it is to be stated that, as soon as the institution was in certain prospect, the idea of a college was revived, and as an accompaniment of the divinity school. There was no institution of the college grade north of Clinton and Schenectady. There seemed to be an opportunity to supply, for the very large section of the State, the facilities for college culture. L. B. Storrs, of Canton, was the first to offer the suggestion. It was seconded most earnestly by Hon. John L. Russell, one of the trustees, and a member of the Presbyterian parish. Members of all the denominations subscribed for the college, and thus greatly increased the subscriptions. A bill was introduced into the Legislature, in the winter of 1856, to incorporate "St. Lawrence University," with power to establish a college and a theological school, the funds of each to be kept separate, while both were to be under the same board

of trustees. This act passed and became a law April 3, 1856. The names of the corporate trustees were Jacob Harsen, of New York; Preston King, of Ogdensburg; Sydney Lawrence, George C. Sherman, of Watertown; John L. Russell, of Canton; Francis Seger, Martin Thatcher, of Canton; Barsillai Hodskin, of Canton; Levi B. Storrs, of Canton; Theodore Caldwell, of Canton; James Sterling, of Sterlingville; F. C. Havemeyer, of New York; Caleb Barstow, of Brooklyn; Thomas Wallace, Josiah Barber, of Auburn; A. C. Moore, of Buffalo; P. H. Bitley, of Branchport; H. W. Barton, George E. Baker, of Albany; Norman Van Nostrand, of Brooklyn; Thomas J. Sawyer, of New York; William S. Balch, of New York; John M. Austin, of Auburn; L. C. Browne, of Hudson; George W. Montgomery, of Rochester.

The corner-stone of the building was laid in Canton, with appropriate ceremonies, June 18, 1856, at 9 A.M. Prayer was offered by Rev. Day K. Lee. An original ode by Mrs. C. M. Sawyer, followed. Then came an address, and the placing the stone in position, by Rev. W. S. Balch. An address by Rev. Dr. T. J. Sawyer followed; then an original ode by Rev. Day K. Lee. The concluding address was by Rev. Dr. E. H. Chapin.

It was a pleasant day. A great crowd of the donors and friends of the institution gathered, and great rejoicing was made.

The first meeting of the trustees was held at Canton, Nov. 13, 1856, when Rev. Dr. T. J. Sawyer was

elected President of the Board; Barsillai Hodskin, Treasurer; and L. B. Storrs, Secretary, —who still holds the office, and also that of Treasurer. The charter was accepted, and other important business was transacted at this meeting, for the interests of the university. In regard to the college, the idea of a literary department did not, as I have been careful to impress, enter into the minds of the original projectors of the Theological School, but, as we have just seen, was suggested by the people in Canton. After the act of incorporation by the New York Legislature, making it in name a "university" instead of a "theological seminary," and subscriptions to some extent were secured, it was thought best to make an effort to obtain a fund from the State; so the Legislature of 1857 was petitioned in that behalf. At first much opposition was made. It was urged that the State had colleges enough already, and that the Universalists had no claim. Hon. Benjamin Squire, of Canton, who was a member, though a Methodist, urged the measure persistently. The measure was carried. April 9, 1857, an act was passed appropriating twenty-five thousand dollars to the university, for advancing general education, on condition that an equal amount be raised by private subscription. The condition was complied with and the appropriation secured. This laid the foundation for the College of Letters and Science which is now in active operation.

In August, 1857, it was announced that the building

was completed. It was in due form delivered over by the Building Committee to the trustees, by deed.

I go back a little in this narrative to say that the turn which had been taken, not in modifying the original plan but in adding to it, was not indeed an unwelcome surprise, yet a surprise. The Rev. Mr. Balch gives me a curious account of the new movement, informing me that with the establishment of the university he had no direct active connection; that his committee had no authority except in the establishment of the Theological School. He adds: "The first notice I had of any serious movement was seeing a flaming notice posted at Madrid, on our arrival there, to the laying of the corner-stone of the 'St. Lawrence University.' I was astonished. The committee had worked the subscriptions, by the direction of the Convention, for a theological school. I took occasion to so state in laying the corner-stone, and in a box under it that name was placed."

As I have said, and as Mr. Balch is particular to say, the two institutions were literally two; and not a penny of the offerings for the one was diverted from the specific object named when it was solicited. But practically they were in very close relations. Each helped the other. If sickness or absence reduced the faculty in the one, help for the contingency came from the other. Formally and officially, Dr. Fisher never had any connection with the college; yet so sincere and friendly were the relations between

the schools that a complete sketch of his work must include, at least in the general details, some history of what was really an afterthought, and which, with the Theological School, became by legal title the St. Lawrence University.

CHAPTER X.

THE CALL TO CANTON.

Drs. Ballou and Sawyer. — Mr. Fisher not generally Known. — Recommended by Dr. Ballou and Rev. D. K. Lee. — Ebenezer Fisher appointed President. — The Inauguration. — The School a Fact. — Ebenezer Fisher its Head for Twenty-one Years. — Unpropitious Omens. — The Weather. — Four Students. — Recollections of Rev. M. R. Leonard. — Demand and Supply. — The Library. — Mr. S. C. Herring's Gift. — Lack of Text-books. — Inventions.

THE very important question was now forced upon the trustees: "To whom shall the school be intrusted? Who shall be the teacher and the responsible head?" There were two men who would have made the formal putting of the question superfluous, had either been available. The Rev. Hosea Ballou, 2d, D.D., — the title was conferred by Harvard College, and he was the first of modern Universalists who received it, — was by pre-eminence the scholar, thinker, writer, and wise man of the denomination. With him no one thought of coming into competition. He was the Saul of the Universalist Israel, — loved, honored, and revered. I have sometimes thought — and in the thought I represent my brethren — that in Dr. Ballou there was embodied more of the spirit of the Master

than in any other man I have known. Had he been available, and had the selection been put to a popular vote of the Universalist people, and this without the formal suggestion of a name, I doubt not that a unanimous decision would have selected that man as the "natural candidate." And it was an office himself would have chosen above all others. But he had been placed in the presidency of Tufts College, where his wise administration and profound Christian influence were fast bringing the young institution into a prominent and a proud position. Having assumed that responsibility, he felt that he had no right to desert it. He was therefore not to be thought of in connection with the New York enterprise.

The second man was the Rev. Thomas J. Sawyer, D.D., — the second of Universalists to receive the honorary title, and this was conferred by Harvard. Dr. Ballou aside, no man would have been thought of as Dr. Sawyer's competitor. He also was felt to be, and he actually was, a "natural candidate." He, however, — perhaps having sorrowful memories of the Clinton experiment, — felt it his duty to resist all entreaty. He was formally tendered the office, but he declined. He therefore was no longer to be thought of in selecting the head of the new school.

The question then became formal as well as real, and a very anxious and perplexing one: "Who is to have the charge of the Theological School?"

At this date, Ebenezer Fisher, pastor of the parish in quiet and unpretending South Dedham, was not known to fame. Except as some glimmer from the special luminary of the "Essex Ministerial Circle" might have reached remote and distant corners, Mr. Fisher was but little known to the Universalist public outside of the clerical circle of Massachusetts. Dr. Ballou had seen him once in the "Circle," had heard many reports from it, had marked him as he spoke in the Boston Association and in the Massachusetts Convention, and had been associated with him on the Board of Home Missions. That was enough for that appreciative understanding: he knew Ebenezer Fisher. The Rev. Day K. Lee had been pastor of a second Universalist parish in Salem, contemporary with a part of Mr. Fisher's pastorate in the old parish. He was there brought into close and sympathetic reciprocal relations with Mr. Fisher. He therefore knew him and adequately appreciated him. I presume that in 1857 Mr. Lee, then settled in Ogdensburg, was the only man in the State of New York who thoroughly knew the then South Dedham pastor. Strange to say (strange! — on the contrary, it was not at all strange), that Dr. Ballou (in an interview with Rev. Mr. Balch) and Mr. Lee, neither having the remotest thought as to the impression on the mind of the other, almost simultaneously and with equal positiveness said: "The man to be placed at the head of the Theological School is Ebenezer Fisher, of South Dedham, Massachusetts." The trustees heeded

the suggestion. The Rev. Richard Eddy, at that time pastor of the Universalist Church at Canton, was authorized to open a correspondence with Mr. Fisher. He wrote to him under date Jan. 25, 1858. The call was accepted Feb. 13.

Mr. Fisher had been in no haste, had shown no eager desire, in reference to the position. He knew too much of the world to expect that the duties of a position so novel, in which there were no precedents to guide, could be otherwise than most exacting. He could but feel that he was honored, for the position was one of great responsibility, and he was never indifferent to the good opinion of his brethren. As I have before said, the call came to him in such a form and under such circumstances that it appeared to him a command. And any command that had the approval of his Master, he could not discuss. Under date South Dedham, Oct. 15, 1857, he writes to a Salem friend: "I do not as yet hear any thing directly from the St. Lawrence University in regard to the proposed professorship; but indirectly I learn that they are counting on me for the place. I shall, however, remain quiet until I hear something from them, and then take my measures accordingly. I have every reason to be satisfied here, unless the appearance of things changes; and I shall not make a move without good reasons." When the word came to him "directly" and in official form, the reasons seemed good; and with no little anxiety, yet in the belief that he was in the way of duty, he accepted the responsible office.

The ceremony of inauguration followed, April 15, 1858. Rev. Pitt Morse offered the prayer of consecration; Rev. T. J. Sawyer, D.D., gave the address; and the incumbent, who was now distinguished as Professor Fisher, gave an inaugural address. And now, however defective the preparation, however uncertain the prospects, however to be looked upon as the day of small things, the result long looked for, toiled for, prayed for, has come. The Universalists have a theological school. Ebenezer Fisher is its responsible head. He is about to begin what was to be by pre-eminence his life work. He began April 18, 1858. He did not leave the great enterprise till death relieved him, Feb. 21, 1879.

With the inauguration of the principal, the work of the Canton Theological School formally begins. It cannot be said that the omens of inauguration day were of a nature to give hope and cheer to any of the participants. I have often heard Dr. Fisher tell with what forced resolution he met the new and strange ordeal. The Rev. Mr. Goodrich notes that "the day was gloomy; a wet snow fell continuously, and the streets of Canton were full of mud;" that "if the weather was adverse on the day of beginning, other circumstances were also unpromising;" that the building "was almost literally empty," its furniture "a few seats, its only library a few books which teacher and pupils carried in their hands." The first class, soon after the opening, included four. They are all actively engaged in the

work of the ministry at this date, — Rev. A. J. Canfield, of Chelsea, Mass., Rev. M. R. Leonard, of Waltham, Mass., Rev. J. M. Pullman, D.D., of New York, and Rev. B. L. Bennett, of Chatham, Mass. This, however, describes the class as it began. It will be somewhat different, as I shall show, when it graduates. The mere recital of the opening of the school gives a picture any thing but pleasing. We can well understand that it required the full vigor of faith, and some of the illusions of hope, to keep the courage firm and the resolution unbroken to bear up under the strange trial.

But if this is true of the teacher, of the years and the experience which temper expectation and prepare for disappointment, how must it have been with the young man, to whom the very word "institution" is suggestive of great things in hand rather than in prospect? In truth, Professor Fisher, besides struggling to keep himself in Canton, had the much more difficult task of holding what few students he had, — so painful to them was the contrast between what they anticipated and what they found. Reflecting that a statement of one who suffered from the ordeal must be specially authentic, I have persuaded the Rev. M. R. Leonard, one of the first four students, to note for my use his recollections of Canton, — both of the inauguration day and of the first years in the history of the school. I give his graphic recital entire. He says: —

"Well do I remember the day on which Dr. Fisher — he was not a doctor then, however — was inaugurated President of the Canton Theological School. It was about the middle of April, 1858, and the weather and roads were exceptionally bad, even for northern New York. I remember those things distinctly, because I travelled on foot, eight miles or more, to attend the inaugurating exercises.

"I had for several years — indeed, I may say from boyhood — cherished the desire of becoming a Universalist minister, and it was with no little satisfaction that I learned that the new theological school established by the Universalist denomination was to be located so near my home. My ideas of the glory and power of the Universalist church were then much greater than they are now; and I expected to find, when I reached Canton, a small crowd of young men, anxious to prepare themselves for the proclamation of the truth I had so long loved. I need hardly say that my expectations were sorely disappointed. On reaching the old Universalist church, where the exercises were to be held, I found that the crowd I had expected consisted of just three young men.

"The exercises of the day, as I recall them, consisted of addresses by Drs. Sawyer and Fisher. One passage in Dr. Sawyer's address I well remember, in which he expressed the hope that he who was that day installed over Canton Theological School might be permitted to remain there till a sufficient number of young men should pass under his instruction to exert a marked influence on the Universalist denomination. However unpromising the occasion may have seemed, his hope was realized. When Dr. Fisher rested from his labors, more than one hundred of the pulpits of our Church — and some of them among the most prominent — were occupied by those who had enjoyed the rare privilege of his counsel and instruction.

"Of Dr. Fisher's inaugural address I remember little or nothing; but my impression of his personal appearance is as

vivid now as on that day. He was then about forty-four years of age ; he seemed, however, to be much older. I think he looked fully as old on that day as during the last days of his life. For some years before going to Canton, he had been in poor health ; and when I first saw him his face had a careworn expression, and withal something of sternness. The very first sight of him assured me that he was a man of dignity, high moral tone, and great intellectual power ; but whether I should be drawn to him personally or not seemed somewhat doubtful. It took but a brief time, however, to banish all such fear from my mind, and I ever found him most genial and approachable. Severe he may sometimes have been on sham and hypocrisy ; but I am sure no earnest, well-meaning student ever found him any other than a kind, encouraging, sympathizing friend. Indeed, I think that most of his students regarded him rather as a father than otherwise.

"The first term at Canton was not very promising or inspiring. There was Dr. — or, as we called him, Professor — Fisher ; there were the four students, and a plain and rather inconvenient building, with neither library nor furniture of any kind. We literally had no books at our command save the text-books required for daily use. Before the close of the term, however, I think the first instalment of the Herring Library arrived. It consisted of the library of Dr. Credner, of Germany. There were several thousand volumes in the collection, but as they were nearly all in a language which neither students nor professor knew any thing about, the benefit we derived from them was not very great. Before the close of the first year, however, we had a sufficiency of books, both in number and variety to answer our needs very well.

"The opening of the second term brought several new students. They were merged in our class, and we all, or at least all who remained till the end of the third year, graduated together.

"Dr. Fisher's personal influence was about the only bond

which held us at Canton during the first year. I recall an incident strongly illustrative of this statement: —

"At the opening of the second term, a young man came from the Meadville Divinity School. He was an earnest Universalist, and wished to patronize our own school. We saw very soon that he was terribly disappointed. The contrast between Meadville and Canton, in point of equipment, was so great that before he had become really acquainted with Dr. Fisher, and unknown to him, he resolved to leave. He accordingly packed up and departed. On the train the doctor happened to meet him, and, learning where he was going, brought the power of his persuasion to bear upon him. The result was the young man returned, and remained through the full course, one of the most devoted students Canton ever had. He was the first, also, among her graduates to lay down his earthly work and enter upon the higher life."

The law of Political Economy held true in regard to the institution, — the want brought the supply, — it incited to the efforts which secured the needful conveniences. Books, periodicals, furniture, slowly, yet surely came. But the process was slow; and for a long period the buildings and the implements were crude, inadequate, and uninviting.

In the vital matter of a library, S. C. Herring, Esq., of New York, — formerly a parishioner of the Rev. Mr. Balch, in the Bleecker Street Universalist Church, — proved indeed a friend to the institution. He gave a thousand dollars specially for that purpose, paid for what is known as the Credner Library, which Mr. Leonard has described. Mr. Herring, as I shall not forget to note in detail, made other gifts in later years. In a

brief address at an Education Meeting in New York, he made a humorous allusion to his own business, and added that the library ought to be put into a "safe!" At this date the Theological School has not only a valuable library, but a most elegant library building, costing not far from nine thousand dollars.

At the outset, Professor Fisher could find no treatise at all adapted to the needs of a Universalist Institution. The necessity that is the mother of invention served him. He composed and had copied his own text-books. I go forward several years to note one particular, which showed not only inventiveness, but considerate delicacy. He mailed to the editor of the "Christian Leader" — the State denominational paper — a theological article which had appeared in a particular periodical, and, asking him to read it carefully, added, "Then write me just what you think of it." The editor answered that the article seemed to him surcharged with thought tersely stated; that it was sound in philosophy and faultless in arrangement; and that, though rather tough for the popular reader, he should certainly reprint it in the "Christian Leader." Dr. Fisher then wrote the editor: "If you *should* carry out your intention and reprint that article, send me by express two hundred copies, for I want it to make into a text-book!" He had delicately refrained from intimating his ulterior object in sending the article to the editor, for he did not wish to exert an undue influence. The next time he saw his editorial brother, he said to him with a hearty

laugh: "You see I got a text-book out of you." Such were the devices of the President of the First Universalist Theological School. Who will say that he was not its creator as well as instructor?

CHAPTER XI.

DARK DAYS.

A second Professor needed. — Incidental Help from the College. — A Regular Assistant indispensable. — Heart must be in the Work. — Rev. Massena Goodrich consulted. — Elected Professor of Biblical Language and Literature. — His Statement of the Conditions. — Reasons for his Resigning. — Dr. Fisher's Relief from a Dilemma. — An Explanation that is not Justification. — Anxiety for Tufts College overshadowing. — Dr. Fisher's earnest Appeal to the General Convention. — Temporary Relief. — A Letter to his Mother. — Incidental Revelation.

THE difficulties described in the preceding chapter, though real, were mainly those that prey upon the spirit and give painful "imaginings." Yet they were such as time, familiarity, and constant attention to the work in hand, might naturally overcome.

During the first year, Professor Fisher succeeded very well. But when the second class entered in April, 1859, he found that an assistant was indispensable. There were not funds enough to pay the salary of another professor, though it was intended by the trustees from the beginning to secure a second one so soon as means could be raised for his support. It was in this contingency that the College was of temporary and incidental help to the Theological School.

I must now go back a little in this history. March 31, 1858, Rev. J. S. Lee, Principal of the "Green Mountain Institute," South Woodstock, Vermont, was elected Professor of Ancient Languages in the St. Lawrence University. In the following August, he was requested to open the Preparatory School, in April, 1859. He accepted the invitation, moved to Canton, and, April 13, 1859, he commenced the first term of the collegiate department, and taught the Greek language in the theological department. Professor Fisher also admitted students of the collegiate department into his classes in logic, rhetoric, and philosophy. This arrangement continued for a little more than a year.

It was soon evident that Professor Fisher must have a regular and constant assistant. He could not do the work alone, nor yet with occasional help. It was not in his nature to slight any thing to which he put his hands. The pressure was twofold, — to get a second professor, and to get the means of his support. Of course the second phase of the enterprise was the serious one, and that which in the attempt brought Professor Fisher great labor, painful anxiety, and sleepless nights, while his heart was chilled in his inability to awaken his brethren to a sense of their responsibilities in coming to the support of an undertaking which themselves had begun. Yet to find the "right man," and one that could be secured on the support which at the best must be very meagre, was by no means an easy undertaking.

I well remember a conversation I had with Professor Fisher in May, 1859. It was during Anniversary Week in Boston. In the store of Abel Tompkins, where I unexpectedly met him, he promptly said to me that he was not in Boston to attend the Anniversary meetings. He had come to consult with the brethren, and to seek counsel and assistance in regard to what he deemed had become so imperative a need, that the success of the school was in peril. "I cannot do the work as it ought to be done," said he, "unless I have a competent assistant. Now who and where is the man?"

I had recently made the acquaintance of a man who was deemed an expert in the Hebrew and the Greek, — and such an one was needed, — and I gave him the name, adding, "He is a man of good character, but not particularly interested in church matters, nor has he any thing more than a sympathy with the denomination." Professor Fisher answered with the accent that I felt to be final: "No, my business is to make Christian ministers, and no one can be of substantial aid in that work, who does not put his whole heart into it." He then added, but with a caution not to repeat his words, for the time had not come for much publicity: "Massena Goodrich is the man, only I cannot approach him until I have some reasonable assurance that a salary can be pledged."

In the course of the summer, by personal interviews and correspondence, he got what to him had the character of promises, in a degree that seemed to him to

warrant a suggestion, though not a formal proposition, which was made to Rev. Mr. Goodrich, of Pawtucket, R. I., in September of the same year. The suggestion was for the twofold purpose of ascertaining if a proposition might be entertained, and, if so, to give Mr. Goodrich a little time for reviving and burnishing up the scholarship which it was well known he had acquired. The suggestion had the desired effect. In the fall of 1860, Mr. Goodrich was induced to make the trial, with issues, however, which neither he nor Professor Fisher foresaw. He was elected Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature.

The "issues," which came as a surprise and a sorrow, justify the title to this chapter. The almost utter failure of what Professor Fisher had with good reason regarded as financial pledges for the support of the second professorship, sorely disappointed him, and caused him constant anxiety and bitter humiliation. The period of suspense makes what he ever remembered, and what Mr. Goodrich continues to remember, as by pre-eminence the "Dark Days" in this Canton history.

In giving the details, it will be seen that no one could serve me so well as the surviving member of the party which for two years worked with feeble hopes, at times against hope. I have solicited of Mr. Goodrich a detailed statement of the difficulties with which he was so directly related, expressing a hope that no personal considerations would tempt him to omit any essential particular. In his answer, the spirit, even more than the let-

ter, of his statement reveals the sorrow of that memory. He also gives interesting particulars of his previous acquaintance with the man with whom he was professionally connected at Canton for two years. From Pawtucket under date, Oct. 28, 1879, he writes me: —

"I received your letter about a fortnight ago, asking me to give my reminiscences of Brother Fisher in connection with the Canton Theological School. As you suggest that those were dark days for the school when I was associated with Professor Fisher, and mention that you wish for such facts as I may deem relevant, I am constrained to mention one or two of a personal character, with which I would not otherwise trouble you. They serve to bring out more distinctly some of the sterling traits of Professor Fisher's character, and are therefore worthy of being mentioned.

"I became acquainted with Professor Fisher in 1847, and at times was somewhat intimately associated with him. Entertaining views similar to his on the subjects of slavery and temperance, and concurring with him in convictions as to the need of more energetic missionary efforts in our denomination, I frequently seconded his exertions in our sectarian and reform gatherings. Of course contact with him deepened my conviction of his mental ability and personal consecration, and I gladly learned that he was called to take the charge of our sole Theological School in 1858. At that time I had no dream of ever being associated with him in such a school, but prayed for his success in his new work. In 1859, however, I attended the Universalist General Convention of our denomination at Rochester, N. Y., and met Professor Fisher; and in the course of conversation with him, he put the question to me, whether I felt competent to undertake to teach the students of the school in Hebrew and Greek. My reply was, that for fifteen years or more I had been giving attention to those languages, but not

with reference to teaching them to others. My study had been specially to help myself in my work as a preacher and expositor. I frankly told him, in addition, that I had been paying less attention to Hebrew for a few years; but that, if he wished, I would for the coming year give special care to that branch of study, so that he might have more clergymen to select from, when he should feel the necessity of calling somebody to help him in his work. He had told me, indeed, that a second class had entered the school, and that, though for the coming year, in view of the small endowment of the institution, he should try to get along alone, the coming of a new class a year thence would compel him to ask for help. We accordingly parted with the understanding that I would give special attention to the Hebrew language for the coming year, but that I should neither feel that he was bound to ask me to come as an assistant professor to Canton, nor should he feel that I was obligated to come. 'Sufficient to the day its own evil.'

"A year sped. As I felt that I was doing no injustice to my parish by increasing my knowledge of the venerable language wherein God spake of old to His chosen people through the prophets, I studied that old dialect more carefully. In July, 1860, however, I received a letter from Professor Fisher, telling me that the trustees of St. Lawrence University had appointed me a professor in the Theological School. In a few days formal notice to that effect came from the Secretary. The salary proffered was comparatively small, but I could live on it with economy, provided it were paid. But I was warned by the experience of older men who had undertaken to serve the denomination, but who had not found every promise fulfilled. I therefore corresponded with Professor Fisher on the point, and found that but a small part of the endowment for the professorship whereto I was invited was raised. An agent however was in the field, and Professor Fisher would do his best to see that my salary was promptly paid. But the prospect was not enticing. I thought that, if the denomination wanted

men to serve them, they should see that they were subjected to neither humiliation nor annoyance. As my parish seemed reluctant to let me leave them, I therefore declined the post.

"On this Professor Fisher turned to others. He dared not ask rich clergymen to go, for they would laugh at the salary, and poorer men probably felt as I did. Meanwhile a couple of months passed. The academical year had begun, but no professor had been obtained. Professor Fisher then turned to me again. 'You were my first choice,' said he, 'but, when you declined, I sought the aid of others. But I have obtained nobody, and yet I must have help. I am here trying to do an indispensable work for the denomination, but I cannot do it alone. I want *you* to help me, and, though I have frankly told you the condition of our finances, I hope from the assurances of brethren that the money will be forthcoming. It shall not fail from any lack of effort on my part.' It was hardly in my nature to repulse such an appeal; and, as brethren whom I soon met at the Universalist General Convention in Boston promised to aid in securing my salary, I went. I thought it as likely as not that the pledges would be fulfilled."

I here interrupt Mr. Goodrich's sketch, reserving the facts which immediately follow for another connection, and pass to his account of the circumstances which broke his relations with the school, and induced him to return to the parish he had left in Pawtucket. He writes: —

"But I suppose I must refer again to the matter which finally sundered my connection with the school. Possibly the promises made to Professor Fisher and myself would have been fulfilled in respect to pecuniary aid, had not the war broken out. Everybody then of adult age, however, recollects how anxious were the experiences and how absorbing the solici-

tudes of that contest; and but little thought was given to the Theological School, or to the two ministers who had been allured toward the borders of Canada to train young men for the ministry. To the credit of Professor Fisher, however, I must say that he never forgot his promises. When, at the close of my first year at Canton, a part of my little salary was unpaid, and the question was left in suspense whether I should leave or remain, my colleague went (September, 1861) to the United States Convention, then meeting in the city of New York, and made an earnest personal appeal to the brethren for help to maintain the school. He proposed that fifty persons or societies be responsible for the salary of his associate. In response to his entreaty, nearly the requisite number of names was secured, and he and myself and a few friends in Canton and Potsdam made up the balance, and the second year was bridged over.

"But the close of that year saw thick clouds brooding over our national horizon. Thousands of our countrymen knew not whether they had a country or not, and the school at Canton seemed to many of our denomination so trivial a matter, that I foresaw that if I remained at Canton, I should be subject to perpetual humiliation and uncertainty. Meanwhile the society that I had left when I went to Canton were without a pastor, and wished me to return; and, as I had done my part toward sustaining a theological school, and the denomination were indifferent to the matter, I concluded to withdraw. I therefore announced my decision to my colleague; and his reply was: 'I do not wonder at your determination, and I frankly say that your decision frees me from the necessity of importuning our brethren; but your withdrawal is a sad blow to the school.'"

It has seemed to me well that Mr. Goodrich's narrative of his experience of the dark days at Canton should

be given entire, though it in some regards anticipates the plan which I had marked out for this history. Before returning to the narrative, I pause to explain. To account for things is by no means attempting their justification. The fact is indisputable that the proverb, "Out of sight, out of mind," held with too much of truth in regard to the important experiment that was being tried near the Canadian border. Professors Fisher and Goodrich were neglected. Their rightful expectations were not met. They did not receive justice; and the tone of complaint in the statement which has been given is fully warranted by the facts. But the explanation (which is by no means a justification) is this: While Tufts College was the creation of the denomination irrespective of State lines, and received aid from all sections, the burden of it naturally fell upon New England, and more especially upon Massachusetts. Dr. Ballou, its first President, was doing an immense service, for a support greatly out of proportion to the work done. Rev. Dr. A. A. Miner, his successor as President, gave three years of service: I say "gave," for he neither asked nor received a salary. Every member of the Faculty was laboring at a very inadequate compensation. The anxiety was great. The struggle was hard to keep the institution in operation. There were constant apprehensions that the enterprise might fail utterly, to the humiliation and almost the demoralization of the denomination. President Miner was before the Massachusetts legislature, petitioning for State aid.

He was interviewing men of wealth, and making every endeavor to enlist their practical sympathy. The Massachusetts churches were assessed in order that the current expenses of the College might be provided for. Those who had given largely found themselves compelled to give more to save what they had given at the first. And I know that not a few did say: "With this burden on our hands, New York ought to take care of *its* Theological School."

On the other hand, it was said that the Canton School, though in New York, was in no sense a State institution; that as the only school of the kind it was for the whole country; that New England was getting the chief benefit from it, as the larger proportion of the Canton graduates were called to New England parishes.

It is no part of my duty to sit as umpire on this question, now happily of the past. On whichever side there may have been blame, or however the blame may have been distributed over both parties, the serious consequence was that the Canton school was the sufferer; the professors were not getting what had been virtually promised them; and the school was brought to the brink of failure.

Dr. Fisher — the honorary D.D. was conferred upon him by the Lombard University, in 1862 — had been led into an agreement with his assistant which he could not meet unless he gave himself personally to the business of raising the funds; and, as it was not in his nature to give a pledge and neglect it, he added to the

arduous duties of his office the much harder and most vexatious of duties, that of begging his brethren to remember their promises; and this necessitated the leaving of his post to perambulate the country, that by personal appeal he might meet his agreement and save the school. I was present at the General Convention of the denomination, in September, 1861, in New York, and heard his appeal, — the same that Mr. Goodrich has referred to. I remember the look of determination with which he entered the pulpit: the session was held in Dr. E. H. Chapin's church. He began by stating the situation at Canton, the promises that had been made him, on the strength of which he had made promises; that he was in honor bound to see that his assistant had the support that was named in the contract; that it was not his business, — it was that of the denomination; that he ought not to be there to plead for what should come without any plea. And he put the question: "Will you here, before this Convention adjourns, give me the pledge that shall enable the Canton work to go on?" I make no attempt to recall his words: I only give their scope. But the earnestness with which they were uttered had a great effect.

The particular plan was to get fifty persons to promise each a specific sum, the object being to meet current obligations, in the hope that an endowment-fund of twenty-five thousand dollars might be secured by other methods, and so put the second professorship on a stable foundation. In that immediate and temporary

object Dr. Fisher was successful. The fifty names were obtained from various parts of the land. Five were from Providence; one or two, I believe, from Pawtucket; several from Boston; and some from New York. Though he had obtained relief from a present exigency, and was by no means assured as to the future, Dr. Fisher returned to his work with a much lighter heart.

A letter dated Canton, Dec. 1, 1858, to his mother, of interest itself, incidentally reveals some of the fears and anticipations which weighed upon him the first year of his Canton life: —

"My dear Mother, — This is your seventy-second birthday; and, as I have for several years past commemorated it by writing you a letter, I cannot neglect to do so this year. I feel, indeed, that I have a special reason to do so this year, because I have removed so much farther from my old home and my early friends; but to be distant is not to forget, and I can witness that my feelings are not diminished in sincerity nor in frequency by the increase of distance. I hope and trust that your health and enjoyment are still preserved to you, so that you can still thank the Giver of all good for prolonged life, as feeling that it is a blessing. My own health is quite good, — equal, indeed, to the best average of several years. I enjoy my labors here very much, and from the testimonies of those around me am led to hope that I am doing some good. I have now nine students, and they are very good and promising young men. It was not in my thoughts, when I wrote you last year, that I should write the next year from this place or position. But so a good Providence has ordered it, and I have no reason to complain. We hope, if it please God, that before many more months are past we shall be able to make you a

visit. The children are all well, and I can hear them romping and tearing around the house, just as I can remember to have done in days which do not yet seem to me to be very far in the past distance.

"I wish to send you some little present ; and, not thinking of any thing else which I can so conveniently send by mail, I enclose . . .

"Your son, EBEN FISHER."

CHAPTER XII.

A CRISIS.

The School Work. — First Graduation Day. — First Presenting of Diplomas. — First Address to Graduates. — Receiving the D.D. — Class of 1862. — War depletes the School. — "All under one Umbrella." — Efforts to endow a second Professorship. — Dr. Fisher in great Anxiety. — Writes to Rev. Mr. Balch. — The Crisis forced. — Light in the dark Cloud. — Gifts actual and conditional. — Charles A. Ropes. — Great relief of Mind. — Letters to Mr. Ropes. — Graphic Statement of Mr. Balch. — John Craig. — The "Man for a Crisis." — Statement of Dr. Saxe. — Letter and Check from Mr. Ropes. — Dr. Fisher's pathetic Response. — The Canton School sure of a Future.

THE statement of Rev. M. Goodrich in giving the negotiations which brought him to Canton, and of the failures to meet pledges which prompted his resignation, necessarily has anticipated some phases of this history. I now return to the date of his assuming duty in Canton, and give a few facts of the working of the school. His acceptance relieved Professor Fisher of much anxiety and toil, and the affairs of the school passed along well during his term of service. Still he had on his mind the constant anxiety arising from uncertain support. A fund must be raised to endow another professorship, else it could have no permanency. He was therefore ever seeking a way by

which this could be done. The war coming on in the spring of 1861 put a stop to this and nearly all other enterprises except the urgent one of saving the country.

Professors Fisher and Goodrich contrived to give instruction to some students of the literary department, and Professor Lee rendered some aid in the theological school. In his many cares, difficulties, and anxieties, Professor Fisher had one great satisfaction, as profound and inspiring as it was novel. April 18, 1861, he had the strange pleasure of giving diplomas to the first class that graduated from the school. It was an occasion of great interest, not alone to himself, but to many friends of the school. The class consisted of five, one of whom died after a successful pastorate of one year, and the others, as I have stated, are now actively engaged in the duties of the ministry. Professor Fisher gave an address to the graduating class, which was published in the "Christian Ambassador," then the New York State paper. It was full of paternal admonition and advice, such as he was ever in the habit of giving to his students on appropriate occasions. His were words of hope and cheer to them, as they stood there, "in all their youthful zeal and energy, ready to step forward into the world's great field of labor." He said: "You are the first fruits of my labors in a sphere which I have felt throughout to be of the highest importance and to involve the weightiest responsibilities. Beyond all others, then, I feel an intense interest in your future faithfulness and usefulness, and I can well adopt,

with reference to you, the sentiment of Paul: "For now I live, if ye stand fast in the [service of the] Lord."

As these words fell from his lips, his voice, Dr. Lee tells me, "became slightly tremulous, his countenance assumed a heavenly glow, his whole demeanor indicated intense feeling; and all hearts were moved, and tears started from many eyes. Herein lay the secret of his hold on his students. He manifested the tenderest and deepest interest in them, not only while they were members of the school, but after they had gone forth into the world to do service there. "In this address," Dr. Lee continues, "he urged them to enter upon their work not as sectarians merely, but as Christian ministers, to maintain true catholicity of feeling, while they were to be loyal to the denomination, to be firm in their convictions, filled with the spirit of Christ, and labor in trust and hope."

On the evening before, Rev. W. S. Balch gave an address, in which he congratulated the faculty, the students, the trustees, and friends of the school, upon the auspicious occasion of the graduation of the first class, and called upon all to rejoice that they were permitted to witness this, a kind of first fruits of the prayers, the labors, and the contributions of the friends of the school.

In regard to this preliminary service, Dr. Lee writes me: "It was fitting that Mr. Balch should stand in this place on this occasion, for no man, perhaps, did more than he to establish and endow the school. It

was the child of his prayers and toils. He laid the corner-stone, and it was now fitting that he welcome the members of the first class, and, with his blessing as well as that of the Principal, send them into the vineyard of the Master. The members of this class, at the date of graduation, were Daniel Ballou, A. B. Hervey, M. R. Leonard, William M. Pattee, James M. Pullman, — differing somewhat, as will be noticed, from its composition when it began.

In June, 1862, Professor Fisher received the honorary degree of D.D. from Lombard University, Galesburg, Illinois; and ever after this he was known by the familiar title, Dr. Fisher.

In April, 1862, another class of seven graduated; and each year, from that time to the present, a class has gone forth from the school, with the exception of 1866 and 1867. The war depleted the classes, and in the last year of the struggle few entered, so that during the two years following there were none to graduate. Dr. Fisher used to boast laughingly that at one time the whole school consisted of himself and one student, Ira Adams, who left, without graduating, in 1866. His humor put the situation sententiously: "At that time the whole school, including the faculty, could walk under one umbrella!"

I again return to the trying date of Professor Goodrich's resignation. In 1862, as has been noted, the failure to establish the needful, the indispensable, fund occasioning that withdrawal, left Dr. Fisher alone

again. But the services of Professor Lee were once more secured to teach Greek Exegesis and Natural Theology; though, being still at the head of the college, he could devote only a few hours in the week to the theological classes. Professor Lee remained in this position for three years, until a new professor was elected in 1865. During these three years, Dr. Fisher made great efforts to obtain an endowment of another professorship. He was authorized by the executive committee to secure an agent to enter the field. "In 1864," — again I quote Dr. Lee, — "Rev. Mr. Balch was appointed agent to raise twenty-five thousand dollars. He hesitated about taking hold of the work again. He had toiled and founded the school, and now he was urged to make an effort to save it. It is a matter of history that Dr. Fisher became almost discouraged at one time, and was on the point of resigning his place and giving up the whole enterprise. He felt disappointed, chagrined, hurt, that the denomination did not come forward and subscribe enough to put the school in good working order, under two professors who could employ all their time for the interests of the school."

A plan for removing the school to Massachusetts had been conceived. In a letter to Mr. Balch, dated, Canton, New York, Dec. 6, 1864, Dr. Fisher writes: "If the school could be properly endowed here, I for one would oppose its removal to Massachusetts, and I would in any event oppose its removal unless it could be amicably accomplished, with full consent of those most nearly

concerned. But, on the other hand, if the school is not properly endowed; if being out of sight it is out of mind; if newspaper appeals fail and convention resolutions are barren; if no live man is willing to act as its agent to solicit funds; if all efforts which I put forth for it must be made at a constant disadvantage; if the collected wisdom of our Board of Trustees can devise no way but to leave the whole thing on my shoulders, tied up as I am here, forty weeks out of the year, including every week when such work can be done to advantage in the cities, — who is to blame me if I listen and reply with avidity to questions coming from a friend of the school and the denomination?" In another letter he writes: "This fund *must* be made up, or I shall feel that it is of no use longer to struggle to sustain a Theological School in Canton."

A crisis had come. It could not be deferred or evaded. The continuing of the Canton School was contingent upon the raising of a fund of not less than twenty-five thousand dollars for the support of the second professorship. The crisis was to be met, not with words, nor with circulars, nor with convention resolutions, — all of which, though good, needful, and in the end effective, could not answer the imperative claim. Can and will this fund be raised? The answer must be in acts, — in the sum pledged and secured. It was a dark cloud, and the future was not cheering. Suddenly, however, a ray shot through the darkness. Dr. Fisher said to me, in the summer of 1874, that he had

extorted the permission to make public a fact which up to that date he had been compelled to keep a strict secret. That fact was to the effect that one man had come to the rescue in a crisis and by the conditional gift of five thousand dollars, had in what followed literally saved the Theological School at Canton. This was in the year 1874. At a later date the denominational paper, the "Christian Leader," alluding to the matter, had occasion to say this: "Some two or three years since, Dr. Fisher called at our office and gave us information to this effect: A crisis had come in the financial condition of the Canton School. Its destiny hung trembling in the balance. The sum of five thousand dollars was needed — must be had — or the school would stop. In that contingency a gentleman, who had on former occasions given generously, came to the rescue. He gave the full five thousand dollars, and the Canton School was thereby saved. The giver had kept him (Dr. Fisher) under injunctions not to give his name or in any way indicate the source whence the great relief came. He had, however, prevailed upon him to remove the injunction of secrecy. 'Now,' added Dr. Fisher, 'you may tell the denomination who gave that five thousand dollars, — Charles A. Ropes, of Salem.'" I introduce this important fact here to add that Mr. Ropes had been a parishioner of Dr. Fisher in Salem; that he had formed a regard for his pastor that indeed included, yet rose above, personal attachment; that he had seen in his pastor what seemed to him a providen-

tial man; that the call to Canton impressed him as a fulfilment of the providential intent; that it had come to him as a conviction that it was a solemn duty to maintain the teacher in his responsible position, — and, as fortune had smiled upon him, he was ready to do his part. But he did not wish to be personally known in the character of a donor. He had therefore, privately and under an injunction of secrecy, said to Dr. Fisher in substance: "In order to relieve you of the responsibility you must incur, I will give you outright, in instalments, the sum of one thousand dollars; and, farther" (the pivotal fact on which the future of the school hinged), "*if you can get other parties to give twenty thousand dollars to endow the second professorship, I will add to the same five thousand dollars, — twenty-five being the minimum on which the professorship can be maintained.*"

Of this pledge toward the fund, more presently. Here I make particular note of the separate and unconditional gift of one thousand dollars, whereby, in connection with assistance derived in smaller sums from other parties, he was enabled to get incidental assistance.

But in the lack of a permanent fund, the relief was temporary. Every year the same ordeal must be passed, and with painful solicitude as to the result. It was this harassing contingency that Professor Goodrich not only saw, but keenly felt. Hence, as he has stated and explained, his resignation and return to New England. Dr. Fisher told me that, in all his professional

career, he never, before or since, experienced such a sense of relief as that imparted by Mr. Rope's pledge. He had a new hope. The fulness of his joy for at least one night robbed him of sleep.

At my urgent solicitation, Mr. Ropes has put into my hands, for such use as I find needful in making an accurate and complete history, certain letters from Dr. Fisher, addressed to himself. From these I make such extracts as seem to me pertinent. These I give in this connection, adding, however, that other parties, as I shall explain, were at work in the hard endeavor to raise the twenty thousand dollars. Mr. Ropes had written to Dr. Fisher his twofold proposition. — I must again ask the reader to be particular in keeping distinct the unconditional offer of one thousand dollars for current needs and the conditional offer towards the professorship fund. Under date, Canton, Sept. 22, 1863, Dr. Fisher replies : —

"Yours of the seventeenth was duly received, and it gave me so much joy that I could hardly sleep during the night, but lay long awake revolving many things of the past and resolving as to what must be done in the future. But your propositions have lifted a great weight of anxiety from me. I express my joy; it is not for me to thank you, for I am but a fellow-worker with you, and the best proof of appreciation which I can give is to do my part as well as you are doing yours. I will explain to you my plans.

First, of that which practically comes first. The thousand dollars must meet some present necessities. For I think it unwise to overlook the present need while making pro-

vision for some future which can care for itself. My first step, then, was to engage Professor Lee to assist me, as he did last year. To meet his salary and some other matters, I will ask you to send me one hundred and twenty-five dollars on the first of January, April, July, and October, 1864, each, — making five hundred dollars for the year. My own salary is still in arrears, and it is needful that it should be paid to meet that. I will ask you to send me, on receipt of this, five hundred dollars, of which I will use say three hundred dollars to meet this deficiency, and with the balance will take up a mortgage on my property here (falling due in April, but which I cannot well meet), and I will have the mortgage transferred to the Institution in such way as to relieve me and secure the money and interest to them. Should the twenty-five thousand dollar plan fail (which I trust it will not), I shall then use this five hundred dollars to carry on the assistant professorship in 1865, so that I shall feel assured of getting on for two years to come, and shall have that time to work in. And, finally, every dollar of this thousand which I can save or redeem from its temporary use for the professorship, as above, I shall devote to the Loan Fund to aid poor students in accomplishing their course of study here. I hope that I can at last bring a pretty large share of it into that use ; and I shall consider all the above uses as merely temporary, to meet an exigency and relieve a present pressure. If in any particular your judgment disapproves of the above plan or any part of it, please say what and wherein.

"As to the twenty-five thousand dollars, I have written to a friend, who was in hopes to raise ten thousand dollars in New York ; also to others ; and I will have a proper notice in the "Ambassador." I hope it will be the beginning of better days for our struggling Institution. Your offer says, twenty thousand dollars raised "in New York ;" but I suppose you did not intend to limit us to this State, but will be satisfied if we only get the twenty thousand dollars.

"I hope, also, that if in the result we can only raise fifteen thousand dollars *additional*, you will accept that, since it would enable us to go on very well with the two professors, and would meet our practical and pressing necessities. But I shall work hard to get up the twenty-five thousand in all."

How this letter was received can be inferred from another, dated Canton, Sept. 29 : —

"Yours, with the enclosed draft of five hundred dollars, came safe to hand, and I thank you for your promptness to meet my plans. Be assured that I understand the responsibility under which I am placed with regard to it, and will watch and economize it as I would an inheritance which belonged to my own children."

The following, from a letter to Mr. Ropes, dated, Canton, Nov. 16, 1863, reports the moderate yet somewhat encouraging success which had attended the effort to raise the fund : —

"I have delayed writing to you in the hope that I might give some more definite account of our success and prospects ; but, as nothing very definite has yet come to my knowledge, I will inform you what indications we thus far have. Brother Brooks was the first to respond for five hundred dollars in behalf of a friend in his society. Dr. Sawyer next announced that two of his friends would give five hundred dollars each ; and, next, Brother Dolphus Skinner agreed to give one thousand dollars if the sum could be made up. You will thus see that we have two thousand five hundred dollars pledged. . . . In Philadelphia our friends are at work, and I hope that some satisfactory result will follow in due time. So also in Rhode Island I look for some effort in our behalf. Every thing thus far looks as auspicious as I could expect. Our school still continues small, though I am looking for some additions yet."

Another letter, of July 16, 1864, contains this : —

"Yours of the thirteenth, enclosing one hundred and twenty-five dollars for the benefit of the Theological School was duly received, and I thank you for your prompt and kind attention. Do not fear that I shall easily give up the attempt to raise the twenty-five thousand dollars, and if faith prevails I shall surely succeed."

Rev. W. S. Balch gives me a thrilling sketch of his travels and labors, in response to Dr. Fisher's call, to help raise the twenty thousand dollars. He travelled in New England, Maryland, and in Pennsylvania, meeting with but small success till, reaching Rochester, New York, he met with a response that amazed him and filled him with joy. Here I must cite a graphic passage : —

"I was in Penn Yan. I had an appointment to be in Rochester to preach, lecture, and plead my errand. It was a Saturday ; the cars were buried in the snow, — no hope there. I found a chance to cross over to Bath, to a branch of the Erie road. The train was behind, — none knew at what hour it would come. So I waited and watched till nine o'clock Sunday morning. We reached Rochester at near the hour of one. I ran to the church almost out of breath, and found Brother Saxe in the Sunday school, who urged all to circulate the notice for the evening.

"After service, the statement of my special object, and the audience dismissed, a brother whom I knew not asked me to step aside, when he asked me if in my sober judgment the St. Lawrence School was well founded and safe. My answer was that the Theological School for which I was working only needed a few thousands more to make it certain and

sufficient for the present, and at some future time twenty-five thousand dollars more, to establish a third professorship, when it would be permanent for all future time. He said: 'Call at my office to-morrow, at ten.' I did so, Brother Asa Saxe with me. Very closely, like a business man, he inquired, and I rehearsed the beginning, progress, conditions, and needs of the school. After describing his own affairs, he said: 'I will engage to give you fifty thousand dollars!'

"We were astonished, — so much moved that speech gave place to feeling. I finally said: 'That is too much for the sum I am seeking to make up. The Theological School will only need twenty-five thousand dollars more to insure its success. That done, I would not spurn your generous offer, but suggest it be given to found a professorship for the college department.' 'Well, you finish your subscriptions, and I will give what I said, and you can dispose of it as shall be thought best.' He then asked: 'How is it with the Clinton School? 'I do not know, but understand Brother Dolphus Skinner had it in hand and got all straight.' Brother Saxe expressed a similar opinion. He then said: 'Well, I will give that ten thousand dollars;' and then continued: 'I cannot well pay it now, but you shall have it in my will, if not paid before, and I shall not live long.' We expressed the desire that, however much the money might be needed, he might live long and be happy in his goodness. The 'Craig Professorships' testify the fulfilment of the promise. Thus encouraged, it took not long to complete the fourteen thousand dollars, and thus not only was the five thousand dollars of Brother Ropes secured, but eighty-five thousand dollars added to our denominational interests, in the space of three months, at a cost of three hundred and four dollars! Who will say that Universalists are ungenerous or disloyal? The heart of Brother Fisher was made glad. Faithful to his vocation, he put forth renewed efforts to give dignity, character, permanence, and greater usefulness to the Canton Theological School."

John Craig was the noble man here referred to. In regard to him and his pledges, described by Mr. Balch, the Rev. Asa Saxe, D.D., now as then pastor of the Rochester Universalist parish, writes me: —

"I remember being present with Brother Balch at Mr. Craig's office when he was raising money for St. Lawrence University, and that a handsome sum was foreshadowed as a bequest, but further I have no recollection. I had so many subsequent consultations with him in regard to that and kindred matters, that it is impossible to separate one from another. The matter continued to grow in his thought until he finally put one hundred and five thousand dollars in his will, for denominational purposes, which was promptly paid, and is now doing service in our cause.

"Mr. Craig was one of the grandest men our church has ever had, — a man of deeds rather than words, — but when he spoke it was to the purpose, and his words told. He was a great man for a crisis. When I became pastor here, the Unitarians had just lost their church by fire, and, under the discouragement, concluded to give up. About ten or twelve of their very best and most wealthy families took seats with us. We came to regard them as our people, and to count on and lean on them; and they were splendid people, — the very centre and fibre of the Unitarian Church. They were good listeners, and among my warmest personal friends.

"At the end of five years, a Unitarian missionary put in an appearance and rallied the fragments of the old Unitarian congregation. These families, with eminent propriety and without any unfriendliness to us, manifested fidelity to their own flag by joining the movement. The day their seats became vacant in our church was a sad and serious one, for we were by no means so numerous and strong then as now. Many were inclined to be discouraged.

"At the close of the service, Mr. Craig said to those within the sound of his voice: 'Now we must all stand by the flag and fight all the harder.' They were simple words, but, coming from such a man, as they were reported from one to another they had an electric effect. They carried us over the crisis, and I never heard afterwards any words of discouragement from that cause. This shows what power there is in words from a man who is sure to verify what he says by deeds."

This is the proper connection for the following from Mr. Ropes to Dr. Fisher, under date, Salem, Mass., Sept. 28, 1865: —

"Esteemed Friend, — I regretted not seeing you again before you left. Enclosed you will please find the five thousand-dollar check on New York, as you wished it. I cannot fully regard this as a gift or donation, but rather as 'bread cast upon the waters' for the cause of religion, our country, and our fellow-men. In this sense it is an investment, and I feel that we are jointly bestowing or investing, — you of the greater gift you possess, and I of my simple money-making gift. May all redound to the glory of our good Father, and may we ever feel that we are not far from the kingdom of heaven if we truly 'love God and our fellow-men.'"

The following is from Dr. Fisher's reply, under date, Canton, Oct. 3, 1865, in which the soul of the long-tried and long-suffering teacher finds relief in an acknowledgment at once cheerful, solemn, and devout: —

"I was away from home on Sunday, and, on my return last evening, I received your letter, with the enclosed check of five thousand dollars for the Theological School. I read with heartfelt emotion the manly Christian sentiments with which

you commit to my charge this munificent gift for the advancement of our common faith. I rejoice to have such a co-worker, and in my labors I shall not forget your words. They will, I trust, make me more patient and careful. May our Father bless all to the glory of his name and the good of men."

The crisis had been met with deeds: it had been safely passed; and the Canton Theological School was firm for the future not less than for the present.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WAR CRISIS.

The Cloud broken. — Hopeful View of the Future. — Letters to Mr. Ropes. — Rev. O. Cone appointed Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature. — Trials occasioned by the War of Rebellion. — Party Spirit. — Disastrous Effects. — Injures the School within and without. — Dr. Fisher's Policy. — His Address to the Students. — A Reflection. — Friends of the School alienated. — The constant Problem. — Dr. Fisher's Attitude as a Citizen. — Statement of Rev. Mr. Goodrich. — End of the War. A new Start and paid-up Pledges.

THE dark cloud had broken. The firm footing had been gained. Henceforth the look is both forward and upward. Anxious fear, paralyzing distrust, hope deferred, all give way to a promised land in full and firm possession. The hard-toiling and weary president of the Canton Theological School now confronts but one serious difficulty, — that of failing health and uncertain strength. But he has fought the hard battle, and the victory is won. His letters from this date have a different tone, — are redolent of happy confidence and of the conviction that, his work being needed, God has graciously answered his many and fervent prayers. The following letter to his Salem friend and helper reveals the new spirit with the new

assurance. As it makes no allusion to the Craig gifts, described by Mr. Balch, it is to be remembered that those gifts were for the most part prospective, awaiting the providential time to become real and operative. It bears date Canton, Jan. 29, 1866 : —

"Since the New Year came in, I have been thinking that I would write to you and inform you of the progress of our affairs here in Canton at the school. First, I may say that we are all in good health and prosperity personally. I have been steadily at work since I left you, in collecting the various pledges and subscriptions which I had obtained. I have collected and invested about nineteen thousand five hundred dollars. Beside this, I have one thousand dollars assigned for the library, of which two hundred dollars has been paid ; and some two hundred dollars for the Loan Fund, — which last is not reckoned in the twenty-five thousand dollars. There yet remain uncollected subscriptions and pledges which I consider good to the amount of five thousand dollars. If these are all paid, it will give us the twenty-five thousand dollars and five hundred dollars over for the Loan Fund. I should add that all expenses are paid up to this date, amounting to six hundred and ninety-four dollars and seventy-eight cents. So I think my hope will be fulfilled, and we shall have twenty-four thousand dollars invested in mortgages, and one thousand dollars in the Library, making twenty-five thousand dollars, with some five hundred dollars for the aid of poor students. The Lord has blessed me in the work, especially by giving me the help of good friends and the blessing of good health to urge on the work to its completion. I have now ten students in the school. Next year I intend and hope to have twenty new ones ; and then I shall feel that the school will have fairly entered on its course on the new and improved order of things. Every thing now looks auspicious. May it so continue."

In another connection, I hope to make an accurate and just record of the benefactors of the Theological School, as also of the College, who proved friends in the time of need; and I shall do this in justice to the historic facts, though in some instances almost against the protest of the donors. Here particulars are deferred, it being enough for this connection that the fund for the second professorship had become a "fact accomplished."

Immediate steps were taken to make the new facilities available. The question was renewed: "Who shall be called to the duties of the second professorship?" Dr. Fisher at once thought of his old friend and co-laborer, Rev. Mr. Goodrich. I have the means of knowing that, while such was his choice, he had not the courage to address him on the subject. The humiliation and disappointment attendant on the first call made him unwilling to even name the subject to him. But he none the less sought the end by indirection. Another call came to Mr. Goodrich, in connection with which Dr. Fisher's name did not appear. I am not, indeed, absolutely certain, but very confident, that he was "behind" that action of the trustees, though the suggestion, even if it did not come from him, was in full accord with this judgment and preference. But Mr. Goodrich, in accordance with the strongly expressed wishes of his people in Pawtucket, declined the call. Several persons were then spoken of; and finally, Sept. 1, 1865, the choice fell upon Rev. Orello Cone, a young man settled

at Little Falls, New York, who had not been long connected with the denomination. He accepted, and his subsequent fourteen years' service as Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature has proved his thoroughness as a scholar, specially in German theology and exegesis, and his fitness for the place.

I began this chapter with the statement that "the dark cloud had broken," and that henceforth a new spirit, a new hope, a new cheerfulness, filled the heart of the man to whom the great enterprise of founding a theological school had been entrusted. But the date must be noted. It was the year 1865, and the terrible war was then just at an end.

To give completeness to particular stages of this history, I find it necessary to carry one stage forward, while others are left behind, awaiting each its time. I must leave the date 1865 and return to an earlier period, and describe other constituents in the dark cloud than those of financial struggle.

The trials naturally and inevitably incident to the enterprise of founding a new institution, and one dependent on the gifts of a people who had not as yet been educated to the giving for interests outside of their parishes, were enough to try the temper and the faith of those on whom the immediate responsibility was placed. But to natural trials were added unnatural and yet greater and more threatening ones.

The school had got no more than a simple start when, at the very time of the struggle to provide for a new

professorship, the terrible civil war came. The two years of crude beginning made but a frail preparation for a convulsion so fearful. And it was *civil* war with the uniform attendants of that most bitter, most personal, most destructive, and most demoralizing of sanguinary contests. The passions that were aroused; the criminations and recriminations; the variances among parishes, neighborhoods, and families, — are frightful to recall even now that their worst fruits have passed away. They were terrible in the endurance. How the little poorly equipped Canton vessel survived the long-continued national tempest, it even now puzzles us to explain. But there was a strong man, a man of faith and of devout consecration, at its helm. In very different forms, indeed, even the story of Columbus is a part of the history that "repeats itself."

Impulsive young men, I hardly need say, are the most indiscreet of partisans. They are apt, in this republic, to be ardent politicians. They inherit, not unfrequently, the convictions, prejudices, and sympathies of their parents, or acquire those of their associates, and add thereto the heats and the indiscretions of inexperience. Dr. Fisher's "boys" — in their relation to the political excitement he called them boys — furnished no exception to the very general rule, and the issues precipitated by the cannon-balls thrown upon Sumter, were discussed within the precincts of the school in very much the same style that they were discussed under more pertinent contingencies. Thereby

the harmony and the usefulness of the infant institution were certainly greatly injured, and even its permanence was put in special jeopardy.

My own belief as to the wiser and safer course to take under such an unlooked-for danger can have but little interest to the reader of these pages, except so far as it has some practical relation to the course which Dr. Fisher actually pursued. For nearly the whole period of his Canton career, I held a responsible editorial position in connection with one or another of the denominational journals. Accepting the view of the situation (which Dr. Fisher also maintained) that the question at issue was moral quite as much as it was political, — that question being none other than the dominance and extension of the institution of slavery, — I felt that short and decisive measures were called for in dealing with those who had not come to the same conclusion, or, in case they had come to the same conclusion, were indifferent as to the result.

Dr. Fisher felt very differently. At the time of journeying to the General Convention of Universalists held at Galesburg, Illinois, after the war, I sat with him all the way from Prescott, opposite Ogdensburg — where he joined our company — to Toronto; and the one leading topic of our conversation was the policy that should have been pursued everywhere, — not alone at Canton, but in the churches, — in reference to the "moral issues" of the Rebellion. His position was based upon his constantly growing discovery that the young man of

twenty really gives but little indication of what he will be at forty; that the young radical is quite likely to ripen into an old conservative; that the young conservative is all the more certain to be radical as he grows older; that youth is in fact not the period of real convictions, but of impulses; that it is to be managed rather than resisted; that it is to be led rather than directed; and that its errors, even if they pertain to "the sum of all villainies," are not necessarily sinful, and do not therefore necessitate didactic instruction or moral censure. On more than one occasion the humble editor and the revered teacher differed, perhaps sharply, in the prints of the denominational press. In every instance the public disagreement gave both parties great pain; for the younger (who was the editor) felt the deepest reverence for the elder; and the elder was the strong friend and well-wisher of the younger.

As for the question which was right and which was wrong, or in what proportion the right and wrong should be distributed, let it await the determination of that judicial period, when not only the heats but the prejudices of the epoch have become things of the past. But here let me make the record that never did I see occasion to distrust the sincerity and the high consecration of the man who felt it his duty to lead his infant institution through the difficulties of the awful crisis, and to hand it down for greater service under the new conditions of the future.

It will be remembered that the agitation of the war

embraced the political convulsion of the year 1860, which resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States, — agitations unparalleled in bitterness, as were the immediate issues. Here, again, the pen of the Rev. Mr. Goodrich gives an "inside view" of the Canton School. He writes me: —

"On arriving at Canton, I went to work. Professor Fisher and myself made a division of the studies, and each took charge of his allotted task. We found embarrassments both within the school and without. The Presidential election occurred soon after I reached Canton, and the movements which soon resulted in our terrible civil war quickly followed. Though our school was almost on the Canada line, the students could not be indifferent to the political agitations which were convulsing the country. Party spirit ran high, and I soon had occasion to note the sagacity and high conscientiousness which characterized Professor Fisher. He had told me that there was sharp bickering between some of the students on political subjects, and feared for its effects on that Christian disposition which candidates for the ministry ought to foster. But while he intimated that it might be necessary to call on the faculty to adopt some measures to prevent bitter contention, he expressed his unwillingness to trouble me with such matters at the very outset of my connection with the school. He soon, therefore, resorted to another expedient.

"It was customary for all the classes to meet together every morning for devotion before beginning the recitations of the day. On two mornings of the week, the professors conducted the exercises, and on the other mornings the students in turn led in the reading of the Scriptures and in prayer. On one morning, therefore, when Professor Fisher's turn came, he read, with manifest feeling, the third chapter of the letter of James;

and, before prayer, he commented at some length on the importance of governing the tongue. He spoke with plainness of the proneness which he had seen on the part of some of the students to indulge in taunting, irritating remarks. Such remarks of course provoked bitter or sarcastic replies, and Christian sympathy seemed likely to expire under the blows of contention.

"It was before Fort Sumter had been fired on; but Professor Fisher reminded the students of the portents in the very air. 'It may be,' said he in substance, 'that these sectional contentions will result in war; and, should this be the case, the country will have need of the services and prayers of all her children. It is our duty at present to strive to calm the agitation, and if possible to avert war; and we, as those who propose to teach others lessons of self-control, should learn to rule our own tongues.' With paternal manner, therefore, and earnest expostulation, he besought the students to foster Christian charity, broad nationality, and that brotherly courtesy which should make their present intercourse agreeable, and in the future leave sweeter memories of their connection in the school. I am glad to say that the appeal was not wholly in vain. Of course a good deal of human nature still remained in the students, but thenceforth there was more forbearance and a more genial courtesy. Professor Fisher himself gladly acknowledged to the students, at some festal day afterward, that he believed they had striven to profit by his expostulations."

But the disturbing effects of the war were by no means restricted to Canton. These were felt all over the land, and not unfrequently a man's foes were those of his own household. Of course the frail and as yet merely incipient institution at Canton felt the shock. In some instances, they who had been its friends, even cham-

pions, became, if not its enemies, at least indifferent to its fate. Promised subscriptions were withheld. Promised co-operation was not made real, and they who had placed dependence thereupon found themselves resting upon a reed. And the great community, which under ordinary circumstances might have been quickened into something of practical sympathy for the school, was so rigidly held by the awful possibilities of the civil strife that any attempt to get even its attention failed. Professor Goodrich was in a special degree the sufferer. The special pledges which were potential in bringing him to Canton — in warranting Professor Fisher in giving him the assurances that secured his assistance — wholly failed, and mainly because of the animosities incidental to the war. Dark days indeed those were. Why must the better kingdom be so often taken as with violence? The tempests of a century drive the exposed mountain oak to sink deeper, and spread wider, the roots upon which its future greatness and grandeur depend. If the analogy holds, the Canton School cannot fail of durability and usefulness in the coming days. Is it not true that in the days of its tribulation God watched over it, and raised up strong men and women to be its protectors? I am so persuaded.

Whatever hesitation Dr. Fisher may have felt as to the proper and just course to be taken with the institution, he never hesitated for an instant in taking a position in regard to his imperilled country. Full of care, worked beyond his strength, anxious as to the effect of

party divisions upon his special charge, he nevertheless found time and made opportunities to attest his position as a patriot, and to influence others to be true to their country in the awful contingency. Once more the industrious and prompt pen of Rev. Mr. Goodrich comes to my assistance. I insert the following sketch as graphic in its portrayal as it is valuable as authentic history: —

"As you have intimated that it would be gratifying to you to receive any further information about him that I feel at liberty to supply, I propose to give a few facts about his career as a patriotic citizen, and during the two years I was associated with him.

"The threatening aspect of public affairs in the earlier portion of 1861 gave him great concern. The prospect of a civil war of such proportions as would mark a contest between the two sections of our land made him shudder. He clung as long as possible to the hope of a peaceful solution of our difficulties. More than once he expressed his wish that Anderson were well out of Fort Sumter. In some respects, indeed, his views differed from my own. In some matters, I feel that cool audacity is the highest prudence; and it seemed to me at times that the halting policy of President Lincoln was a perilous one. Perhaps Professor Fisher foresaw more clearly than myself the magnitude of the strife, and was very anxious to secure for the government the support of every Northern citizen. Hence he was exceedingly solicitous to avoid any thing that savored of narrow partisanship. On the Fourth of July, in that year, he delivered an oration at Potsdam. I did not listen to it, but heard from citizens of that town that it was a thoughtful address, enforcing the lessons of the Revolutionary struggle, and inculcating a lofty patriotism. In the following fall, the

annual election was to take place in the State, and Professor Fisher attended the County Convention, which was held in Canton. As is well known, St. Lawrence County is overwhelmingly Republican, and would elect any nominee it pleased ; but Professor Fisher was anxious to secure a national rather than a party triumph. He therefore advocated the nomination of a Union ticket for county officers, whereon the names of some loyal Democrats should be put. I was not present at the convention, for I had scarcely become a voter ; but I heard that Professor Fisher made a powerful speech in support of the policy he favored, and carried the convention with him. Such a ticket was nominated and afterward triumphantly elected.

" Time rolled on ; reverses and trials gradually made patriots of one heart, and an emphatic demand began to be made on the President for a proclamation of emancipation. As everybody knows, however, there was a class at the North who continued to favor a rose-water policy. We had some of them in Canton, and were made to see how reluctant they were to touch the sacred institution of slavery. It was proposed to hold a Union celebration in our town on Independence Day, 1862. A committee selected to make arrangements for a town gathering, however, found trouble in agreeing on a programme. It was feared that some of the Republicans were so radical that they would be rash enough to hint that the ulcer in our body-politic was slavery. It was apprehended that one or two of them might suggest that it was doubtful whether the Union cause would triumph till the administration got rid of its squeamishness, and decided to accept the services of the sable sons of the land in helping to put down the rebellion. I do not know whether Professor Fisher was applied to to know how guarded he would be in a Fourth of July speech ; but it was doubtless finally concluded by some of our timorous brethren that neither he nor I would consent to be muzzled. At a late hour, therefore, the project of a public meeting was given up.

"On the Third of July, however, Professor Fisher came to me, and proposed that we hold an informal gathering on the University Grounds the next afternoon. He pertinently suggested that the reverses which McClellan had been suffering on the peninsula, and the few successes that had then crowned the Union arms, had caused a despondency in the public mind from which it was desirable to lift such of our countrymen as we could influence. A patriotic assemblage might, therefore, do our townsmen good. Of course I favored the plan. Word was therefore passed round that such a meeting would be held. At the appointed time, a good concourse gathered. Settees were brought from the college building, and placed on the shady side of the edifice, a temporary stand erected, and the exercises began. Rob Roy was on his own heather, and everybody felt at ease. "American" and other national airs were sung, and Professor Fisher led off with an earnest speech. Those who were wont to hear him speak years before at the Universalist Reform Society's yearly meetings can imagine with what energy and unction he spoke. Others followed: professors and some of the students of the school, and a few professional men of the town. As our Methodist brethren sometimes say, when thought and expression are very spontaneous, we all enjoyed uncommon liberty that day. We did hundreds of our fellow-citizens good, therefore, and the verdict was that the St. Lawrence University was the nursery, not only of deep piety and sound learning, but of bold and genuine patriotism.

"Another incident I recall, both on account of its solemn nature, and because it marked the close of my official connection with the Theological School. Shortly after the celebration above mentioned, I left Canton for a visit to my native city, which I had not visited for two years; and it was during this vacation that the decision was made that I should withdraw from the school. Late in September, however, I returned to Canton to pack up my goods. It was a week or two after the battle of Antietam, and at that battle Colonel Goodrich, a citizen

of Canton and a former neighbor of mine, had been killed. His lifeless form was brought to Canton for burial, and arrived at that town a few hours subsequent to my coming. It was, I think, on Thursday evening, and his funeral was to take place on the following Saturday. I was gratified to learn that his former townsmen had requested Professor Fisher to deliver a eulogy on the sad occasion. But I found that my own services were also desired. In the previous year, Colonel Goodrich had enlisted a company in Canton and the neighborhood, and the citizens of the town subscribed for a flag. For some reason I was appointed to present it to the company in behalf of the givers; and now, Mrs. Goodrich, widowed as she was, was desirous that I should tender the special religious consolation which she and her fatherless daughter needed.

"I well recollect the day and the occasion. Glowing sunbeams cast their light on the darkened home, and lent glory to the landscape around. The religious services were appointed to take place at the late abode of the deceased. The house was filled to overflowing, and a sympathizing throng crowded the front yard and garden. As I stood a little in front of the door, indeed, I noticed the massive form of a corpulent man that overfilled a large chair by my side, and was told that the visitor was Preston King, the honored senator, who had come to testify his respect for the dead patriot. I performed my part of the work, and then the unconscious form was taken by tender hands to the hearse, and, to the accompaniment of strains of wailing music, was borne to the Presbyterian church. As that edifice was larger than the Universalist, it was proffered for the occasion, and there, in the presence of a great crowd, Professor Fisher pronounced the eulogy. I recollect that it was earnest, tender, and discriminating; and I was glad that Dr. Fisher stated with emphasis the principles that were at stake in the life and death contest then waging in our land. Evidently he recollected, while preparing his discourse, that there would be some present who would mourn Colonel Goodrich as a neighbor,

while they yet lacked sympathy for the cause for which he poured forth his blood. Hence he paused at one sentence, and said, 'Some of you will ask why I lay stress on these matters? I answer, because they are the points which this friend, who lies lifeless before us, would emphasize were he able to speak to us to-day.'

"The sad services over, we followed the lifeless form to its resting-place, and committed it to the ground, 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes.' On the next day, as the Universalist parish were destitute of a pastor, I preached to them at their request; and in the quiet Sabbath evening many of the parish joined Professor Fisher, the students, and myself in a farewell conference in the College Chapel. And thus, with hymn and prayer, and earnest exhortation, my official relation with Professor Fisher closed. Our friendship, however, remained unbroken, and, though temporarily sundered by death, will be renewed in Paradise, and eternized in Heaven."

In many ways, the passions, the absorbing anxieties, the division of scholars and neighbors, even of families, occasioned by the war, went hard with the Canton Institution. Students left; applicants did not come. At one time, as I have before incidentally noted, the Theological School had got down to one student and teacher! But the war ended in a victory to the Nation. The Union was saved. The situation was accepted, at least in form. The tempest subsided, and the little Canton ark, with its reduced company, was safely floating upon the quiet waters. And all was ready for what proved to be auspicious, — a new start on better, and paid-up pledges.

CHAPTER XIV.

MINOR CRISES.

The changed Prospects. — Few special Incidents. — "Never finished." — The College Career. — Reciprocal Services. — Professor Lee. — A third Professorship. — Subscription Support. — Professor Lee installed. — Inadequate Salaries. — Dr. Fisher called to Tufts. — Another Issue forced. — Successfully met. — Rev. D. C. Tomlinson's Canvass. — His Statement. — Meeting in Dr. Chapin's Church. — Generous Pledges. — George A. Dockstader's Pledge. — The Fund raised. — "Prospective Gravestones." — Anecdote of P. T. Barnum. — Dr. Fisher's last financial Contingency.

THE proverb holds true: "Happy the people whose annals are dull." It is the period of difficulty, of heroic struggle to overcome obstacles, of hair-breadth escapes, that furnishes incidents. The peaceful flow of prosperous enterprise is monotonous in the recital. It has no events to thrill and enlist sympathy. The anxieties, the hopes thwarted, the strategy to carry intentions into effect, furnish the materials for romance. The lovers at last united in marital ties, and happy in the attainment of the heart's wish, the novel comes to a close.

The incidents I have gathered, and now presented, pertain substantially to the first ten or twelve years of

Dr. Fisher's life in Canton. They make the readable part of the history. After the financial success and the safe endowment of the two professorships, with the large increase of library and other school facilities, the professional life of the hard-tried but now triumphant instructor flowed on peacefully. Not that he had no new difficulties, no fresh anxieties, no superadded cause for regret and complaint. Earnest life is never without these. But the mountain of difficulty had been removed, and new obstacles, however serious in themselves, were trivial in comparison with those which had been overcome. I may say, then, that the last ten years of Dr. Fisher's life were happy and serene. There were the annual examinations, the annual graduations, the annual baccalaureates, the annual openings, the annual festivals; and, in all the essentials, each was a repetition of its predecessor. The valiant man had entered upon the fruits of his labors, and was happy in the love of a host of graduates who honored him as a spiritual father, who revered and will ever revere his pure memory. It is the period of quiet annals, and therefore it furnishes few incidents that could interest or profit in the recital.

I have given chapters of the first ten years. A few pages may contain all that need be told of the last ten as pertaining exclusively to the school. In this latter period, there were new contingencies, yet none that awakened very serious apprehensions in regard to the Institution. In reference to a particular fortress

in the process of construction, I once heard the question: "When will that fort be finished?" I remember the answer: "Never! — forts are never finished." Institutions are never finished. The subscription-book is never closed. Always there will be exigencies, and always there will be financial crises. The theological school, like the particular fortress, is always in process of making, but it is never made. The Canton School was not "disposed of," but it was firm and out of danger. It might be moved, and have another "local habitation," but *it* was assured. Presently I shall give facts in illustration.

But — so closely did the literary department cooperate with the theological — I must again retrace my steps and briefly sketch the history of the College.

In April, 1859, Rev. J. S. Lee — I recapitulate the essential facts — came to Canton at the request of the Executive Committee, and opened an Academical School which was designed, as soon as a fund could be raised and students fitted, to be merged in a college. The first students began to fit for college, and some of them entered upon a full college course. It was also understood that Prof. Lee was to teach Greek, and aid all in his power in the Theological School.

The relations between the two departments were, as I have sought to make clear, from the beginning friendly and pleasant. Differences of opinion arose, but no outbreaks took place.

The students of the two schools, after the first term,

met in separate apartments for the morning devotions, and had their separate literary societies.

In September, 1860, Professor John W. Clapp was elected Professor of Mathematics, and labored with Professor Lee until August, 1865, when he resigned, and Professor N. White, now President of Lombard University, took his place. In September, 1865, Miss Henrietta R. Burrington, afterwards Mrs. Bingham, was chosen preceptress of the female department, and resigned March, 1866, on her marriage with Mr. Bingham.

The first class, of two gentlemen, graduated June, 1865, and a class each year since, with the exception of 1870.

After the fifth class had graduated in July, 1868, Professor Lee, who had performed the labor of two men nearly all the time since he became connected with the College, and had become nervous, worn out, and almost discouraged, was granted nine months' leave of absence, in order that he might visit Europe and Palestine, and at the same time Professor White was elected temporary Principal, and Rev. Moses Marston was elected Professor of Latin and Greek. In October, 1868, Rev. R. Fisk, Jr., having been elected President of the College, took his place at the head of the Faculty.

Professor Lee returned greatly invigorated in March, 1869, and resigned his place in the College and accepted a professorship in the Theological School. Professor

White resigned in August, 1871, and President Fisk in January, 1872. February 9, 1872, Rev. A. G. Gaines, pastor of the Canton parish, was appointed acting President and Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, and permanent President, June, 1873, and still holds this position. The academical department and Preparatory School was abolished in July, 1866, and a full course of study, classical and scientific, was arranged for the College. For two or three years prior to this, students had been pursuing a college course, however. Dr. Fisher usually acted as one of the Examining Committee of the College, and spoke at annual gatherings, and wrote in its favor.

I make the record that Professor Lee, leaving the College, accepted a professorship in the Theological School. This has the important and encouraging characteristic of a third professorship. But at the outset this chair had the fatal lack, — it was not endowed. But a subscription was made to pay the salary, to be collected annually for five years, Jan. 14, 1869. Mr. Lee's special professorship was that of Ecclesiastical History and Biblical Archæology. On his return from the Old World, he accepted the appointment, and took his place April 3, 1869.

Once more Dr. Fisher was made happy. He felt that the school was well equipped with teachers, and that it must start on a new career of prosperity. At the Annual Commencement, following June 28, 1869, Professor Lee was consecrated to his office. Prayer

was offered by Dr. Fisher, and an address was given on "The Province and Uses of Ecclesiastical History" by Professor Lee.

I have said that there were new contingencies. This is rigidly true. There were contingencies in themselves serious: they were slight only as they contrasted with the obstacles which had been overcome. Dr. Fisher's salary was small. It had not "gone up" with the war prices and the financial inflation, — at least, not in any thing like a just proportion. The school was established and it was endowed. The time had come when he must think a little more of himself and his family, and he justly demanded an increase of salary.

At that juncture, a new contingency forced another issue. The Trustees of Tufts College had decided to add a theological department, for which the late Silvanus Packard had made a large bequest.

In the summer of 1869, Dr. Fisher was invited to a professorship in the new Divinity School of Tufts College, as colleague with Rev. Dr. T. J. Sawyer. He felt it his duty to accept, unless his salary was increased by the adding of $10,000 to the endowment fund of his office. His many friends, and the friends of the school, took alarm. The results I shall soon give.

The Rev. D. C. Tomlinson, at the time pastor of the Universalist Church in Watertown, N. Y., had disclosed an unusual faculty in the canvass for funds. At different times he served the Canton schools, and with solid results. At my call, he gives me the interesting recital

of his twofold endeavor to raise funds for the University, — in the first instance, to prevent the professor from resigning; and, in the second, to hold Dr. Fisher against the new allurement in the direction of College Hill, Mass. He gives me the following: —

"When I was preaching in Watertown, N. Y., I exchanged pulpits with Rev. S. Goodenough, who was then pastor of our Canton church. This occurred in the autumn of 1868. I was invited to make my home at Dr. Fisher's. During my brief stay he gave me an insight into the financial condition of the St. Lawrence University, and more especially the theological department, of which he was President.

"'I am fearful,' said he, 'that we must close the doors of the college, for we have not sufficient income to pay the professors living salaries. Unless something is done, and immediately, we shall all hand in our letters of resignation.'

"I said, hopefully, 'Dr. Fisher, there are enough Universalists of wealth in the city of New York to relieve the financial needs of this institution, and put the school into good working order, if they were only made acquainted with the real condition.' Dr. Fisher looked earnestly into my eyes, and inquired, 'Do you really think what you have just stated?' I replied, 'I DO.' In the next breath he said, 'It is then your duty to go on to New York. Will you not spare a few weeks and see what can be done?' 'I will,' was my reply, 'provided I can persuade my congregation to give me a leave of absence, and you will fill my pulpit.'

"During a short interval, Dr. Fisher wrote Dr. Chapin, informing him of the financial embarrassment of the institution, which was a needful preparation for my coming. The leave of absence was granted by my society, and I went on to New York city with a determined will to overcome every obstruction. I sought an interview with Dr. Chapin, and requested

him to give notice at the close of his Sunday morning service that Rev. Mr. Tomlinson, an agent of the St. Lawrence University, would like to consult with such friends as were interested in the educational work of our Church. The notice was given, and some eight or ten friends gathered in the central portion of the church, some standing and others sitting.

"Dr. Chapin introduced me to the friends, and drew a letter from his side-pocket, saying that he had just received a letter from Dr. Fisher, which he would like to read; after the letter was read, he requested me to make a statement to the friends, which I did briefly; and, as soon as the last word was spoken, Mr. B. F. Romaine said, with much feeling, 'Put me down for five hundred dollars for immediate aid.' This was the dawn of hope. Before these few friends separated, it was decided to hold a Mass Educational Meeting in Dr. Chapin's church. Hon. Horace Greeley was invited by me to preside, and he most cordially consented to do so.

"There was no one present at this meeting that made a more favorable impression upon the solid men present than Dr. Fisher. C. P. Huntington, Vice-President of the Central Pacific R. R., made special reference to him the next day when he passed over his thousand dollars: 'Dr. Fisher is the right man for your institution, and, with such a man at the head of the Theological School, it should not suffer for the want of a little money.' The Universalists of New York, Brooklyn, Rochester, Buffalo, and other places contributed liberally until more than fifty thousand dollars was contributed for the relief of the college. I had now been in the field little more than three months, and returned to my parish for real Christian work.

"Unexpectedly an 'order' came from Rev. J. M. Pullman, Trustee, calling upon me to report at his office for duty. Like a good soldier, I obeyed, and respectfully bowed to my superior and inquired, 'What is your will?' He said that 'Dr. Fisher will resign his position, unless his salary is made secure by an additional endowment of ten thousand dollars.' (This was oc-

casioned by the call from Tufts.) I said, 'Dr. Fisher is justified in taking this position, for he has never been half paid for his services, and it is high time that he laid aside something for a rainy day.' Bro. Pullman inquired, 'If I believed the additional ten thousand dollars could be obtained?' I replied, 'That there were five men in this city that must answer this question.' I was 'ordered' to see the five men and report.

"Directly I went to No. 21 Spruce Street (to George A. Dockstader), and stated briefly the necessity of increasing the endowment set apart for the support of Dr. Fisher. 'Well,' said he, 'I am a Fisher man, and at the present time it seems that he is essential to the success of the institution: I will give five thousand dollars.' I could hardly contain myself. I then went directly to F. C. Havemeyer, who gave one thousand dollars. B. F. Romaine gave one thousand dollars. Now I was prepared to report. The balance was contributed by a few friends in Buffalo. A. C. Moore and Solomon Drullard and others responded liberally, which enabled me to return to my good people in Watertown."

I here record an incident. Dr. Chapin at the meeting held at his church just referred to made a thrilling appeal to men of wealth: "Give in the time of present need: do not give the encouragement of 'a prospective gravestone.'" The next day I met Mr. P. T. Barnum. In his peculiar way of coming to a point, he said: "Dr. Chapin hit me last night. That 'prospective gravestone' meant mine, though he did not know it. I had put something in my will for that Canton school, but, after getting that hit, I have taken it out, and made it over without waiting to die." Afterwards he said to me: "Chapin has a strange faculty

for hitting the nail on the head. I cannot forget that 'prospective gravestone.'" He alluded to it again when, in the Centennial year of the Universalist church, he gave a large sum to the Murray Fund, as the Centennial Fund was called: "Better now," said he, "than in my 'prospective gravestone'!"

The last of financial contingencies ever to be suffered by Dr. Fisher was a thing of the past. He had henceforth nothing to disturb him in his professional situation. The future was all clear.

CHAPTER XV.

WITHIN THE SCHOOL.

Discipline. — No Palliation for Sin. — An Example of Reproof. — Method with the Class. — No Mercy in Criticism. — Yet always Paternal. — Students get used to it. — Preaching for Criticism. — The Manner of Criticism. — The Teacher as exacting of Himself. — He always "got the Lesson." —The Discipline of Example.

I TURN for a moment to that which can hardly be described by details, — the method pursued by the teacher, and the discipline he administered within the school. I speak of discipline. A school which did not admit of this, or necessitate it, would be a misnomer. If ministers are men, students for the ministry must come under the same category. The mere circumstance that a young man contemplates so responsible an office as the Christian ministry, does not imply that in all his ways his spirit and acts will fully accord with the precepts of the Gospel he intends to preach. The head of a Theological School will have occasion to admonish; unhappily, at times, to cast out. Dr. Fisher was the most lenient of men towards every thing except sin. Faults of passion, indiscretions of speech, and the foibles which imply weakness rather than deliberate wickedness, he could treat with due allowance. But for the evil

intent he had no palliating words. He would not be instrumental in putting into the ministry any man whom he deemed capable of conduct that might bring disgrace upon the sacred calling. Always his ambition was to make Christian ministers. To that end he admonished if there was occasion for warning, more careful of the moral than even of the intellectual nature. He preferred the good minister to the great one, except in the sense that no one is great unless he be good. It was inevitable that occasionally he would be compelled to resort to decisive, perhaps severe, measures. From the painful duty he never flinched.

At times it would appear evident that the student had mistaken the calling which he had elected, or else that he must thoroughly change his spirit and manner before he could hope for usefulness in the sacred office.

Human nature was the same at Canton as in all other communities. The President at Canton had made the discovery that oddities of tone and manner, even undisguised eccentricities, provided they were not expressive of vicious proclivities, were no ground of discouragement. The age of twenty, or thereabouts, was hardly a key to the character of the same person at thirty. The teacher, therefore, usually tried discipline before expulsion. He always wanted to save: for the moment, he destroyed to make alive again. But he was faithful. He never spared the foible, however tender he may have felt towards the person. Reproof, rebuke, warning, were never diluted with sentimentality.

The scalpel went to the quick; and, if the subject suffered to the end of amendment, he still suffered. In this I but transcribe and condense what many of the graduates of Canton have told me, — in some instances, gratefully telling a personal experience. The statement of a disinterested spectator — one fully competent to appreciate the spirit, intent, and method of the teacher — will better communicate to the reader the discipline that was observed in the Canton School. The Rev. Mr. Goodrich gives me the following: —

"It was a practice on every Wednesday for certain members of the Senior and Middle classes to preach. The hearing and criticism of the Seniors were the work of Professor Fisher, save when, at his request, I relieved him of the task. It was but seldom that I could be present when Professor Fisher was in charge, as my own classes occupied my time. Occasionally, however, some of my classes would meet at an earlier hour in the afternoon, and allow me to retire from my recitation-room, and, in such a case, I would step into the chapel. I well recollect with how much acumen and judgment my colleague would criticise the discourses that were read.

"One instance comes to my memory which will illustrate his fidelity. A new student had come to the school, who entered somewhat in advance. He had prepared a discourse probably before coming to Canton, and was in travail to be delivered of it. In spirit and expression it was in the vein of the come-outer sermons that used to be in vogue thirty years ago. The elocution of the student was so peculiar as to provoke a smile; but laughter was awed into silence by amazement. After the discourse was finished, the students, as was their wont, expressed their opinions on the matter and manner, and then Professor Fisher took the case in hand. For fifteen

or twenty minutes, he animadverted on the sermon with calm severity that yet seemed merciless. He put the question to the student, 'Why do you wish to enter the ministry, if you entertain such convictions about ministers as you have expressed? You have depicted them as a band of time-servers; you speak of them as suppressing the deepest convictions of their souls, lest they offend some rich or influential members of their parishes. If this is the case, why do you crave their companionship? Are you sure that you will have so much more manliness and heroism than they, that you will never falter? Do you suppose that you are going to convert people to magnanimity by roughly assailing them? Are you Christian in your manner of expression? If I have read the New Testament aright, our Lord's manner was marked by sympathy. I know that he oft used strong language, and could sharply rebuke, but beneath and behind all his words there was compassionate love. In your discourse, there were scornful contempt and bitter upbraiding; but I doubt whether we can find scorn expressed in any of the utterances of Christ.'

"Of course, I felt the justice of Professor Fisher's criticisms, but I could not help pitying the unfortunate student. I was not surprised to learn that he kept his bed all the next day. My colleague half regretted that he had talked so disparagingly; but, as the young man soon left the school and began to preach, Professor Fisher felt thankful that he had dealt with him so faithfully.

"Of course, I need not speak to you of the rich humor that occasionally marked Professor Fisher's instructions. I recall one instance in which it had ample scope. The students had a debating society or two, and the professors frequently attended their meetings. On one evening, the subject of spiritualism came up, and one or two of the students were disposed to treat its claims, not merely with lenity, but with favor. The professor's spirit however, like Paul's at Athens, was stirred within him; and, after disposing of the arguments advanced,

he treated the whole matter with unsparing ridicule. While most of us enjoyed the pat comparisons and allusions, we went to our homes laughing at the absurdities that he had pointed out, and admiring the racy humor which had exploded the crudities that were puzzling or deceiving feebler minds."

I have been in Canton on several commencement occasions, which gave me opportunities to witness as many examinations of classes. They were conducted by the Instructor, visitors taking the privilege to ask questions, if so disposed, after the teacher's work was through. I had also two days' opportunities to be present on the ordinary occasions when only the customary exercises and services were conducted. This was about fourteen years after I had met Dr. Fisher in the Essex Ministerial Circle; but the manner of the teacher, his thoroughness, the relentless searching and testing of his questions, at once took me back to those earlier days when in that circle he sat the master in our little Israel. Of course, the subject-matter was different. In the circle, it was a critic dealing with ideas; in the school, it was the instructor dealing with facts, or with thoughts as expressed in the text-book. But the instant apprehension of inaccurate statement, of failure to reclothe with precision the matter of the lesson, and the steadiness with which the student was held to essential points, vividly renewed the earlier memories.

In the chapel, when the young men preached for criticism, — never to an audience that inspired, — the renewal of the Circle days was complete. If there was a "lame metaphor;" or if matter that belonged to

"thirdly" had got into "secondly;" or if there was looseness, or ambiguity of statement, — the defect in every case was faithfully noted, and the correction impressively made. I noted that the "subject" had made the discovery that it was absurd to indulge in "hurt feelings," even in sensitiveness to the most searching and emphatic correction. Having "got used to it," the young man almost relished the infliction! It could never escape his thought that the relentless critic was his friend, and the paternal tone of censure — it may be of reproof — but strengthened the confidence and the love with which he always approached the President of the school.

But what he required of others, he exacted of himself. For the twenty-one years of his labors in the school, he always "got the lesson." No matter how familiar it became to him, from teaching and reciting, he never went to his class without first renewing the subject and the facts in his own mind. He was, therefore, always full of the subject. He had every part of it at easy and instant command. And, in the manner of teaching, there was no appearance of "speaking by the book," — he spoke from his own mind and character. Scores of his students have told me the equivalent of this. But the general fact was not out of my thought for an instant in the few hours that I was a spectator of his method. I doubt not that this example of personal fidelity, the magnetism of his manner, was chief among the disciplinary forces that made him the ruler in his school, even when there was no appearance of ruling.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITHOUT THE SCHOOL.

Public Spirit. — Preaching in the Vicinity of Canton. — Attending Conventions and Associations. — Love of Science. — Interest in General Education. — Patriotic Speeches. — The Confidence of the Public.

DR. FISHER was born to be a public man. In large degree, he was charged with a public spirit. He felt a deep interest in all movements pertaining to the reformation of society and the general welfare of humanity. His chief interest, after he came to Canton, was in the Theological School, and he never allowed other matters to come between himself and his professional duties. Still he did not see occasion to restrict his labors and sympathies wholly to the school. He preached very frequently in the towns around Canton. For several years he supplied the pulpit in Potsdam, where he was greatly beloved, as he was elsewhere. He preached in other places, and took a deep interest in promoting the cause of Christian truth wherever he could make his influence felt. He was often called upon to officiate at funerals and weddings, and he knew how to comfort the mourner, and with becoming zest join in the festive joys of the social circle.

He attended the General Convention and the State Conventions and the Associations whenever he was able to do so. His voice was always heard at these gatherings, in counsel, warning, rebuke, or encouragement. He gained much in earnestness and effective eloquence by coming to Canton, pursuing his studies, and engaging in the discussion of sacred themes with the professors and students. In his address to the first graduating class, he remarked that he felt more like a student with them than a teacher, for he, with them, had studied the themes which had been discussed for the three years.

He was versed in natural science, and he loved to lecture upon some of its departments, especially in its bearing upon religious truth. By invitation, he many times repeated a lecture on "The Compensations of Nature," which was always received with great favor.

He was interested in educational matters generally. He took an active part in consolidating the school districts of Canton village. He introduced the graded system into the schools, whereby an entire revolution was wrought in the modes of instruction.

His services were frequently sought for at the Fourth of July gatherings, and in political conventions, and in political campaigns. In his addresses on these occasions, he always rose above mere party considerations, and endeavored to elevate the minds of his hearers into a more healthy atmosphere than that which usually surrounds the political meeting or caucus. He was always

welcome in the meetings of the County Teachers' Association, and temperance gatherings. He was eminently practical in his mode of dealing with matters of moral and social reform. His logical power and common-sense appeals and homely illustrations told with wonderful effect. For many years, till his death, he was a member of the Local or Managing Board of the Potsdam Normal School, and the Principal, Rev. Dr. M. McVicar, acknowledged that he was of eminent service.

He often spoke in the very spirit of patriotic eloquence during the Civil War, and he did much to encourage the languishing minds of the people. Thus his influence was felt far and wide, beyond the walls of the University. He was an earnest student of politics and political economy, and he frequently lectured on those subjects. The people of St. Lawrence County had great confidence in him as a safe expounder of them. Far and near, he was talked of as a candidate for member of Congress and other high political positions. But his mission was that of founding an institution, and from that no temptation could allure him. That was principal: all else was incidental. In that service he literally died.

CHAPTER XVII.

WITHIN THE HOME.

Homesickness of Students. — Especially on festive Days. — First Thanksgiving at Canton. — Thought of the "Boys." — Mrs. Fisher's Project. — "Adopted Sons" for the Day. — Reunion of Students. — Mrs. Fisher's constant Care for the Students. — Fitting up of Students' Rooms. — Sick Students cared for at her House. — The Effect in keeping the Students. — Students' Testimonies. — Rev. Mr. Goodrich's Statement.

UNDER this head, I give a brief chapter, which, in its importance, has hardly a secondary place. I am to record what, in not a few instances, almost turned the scale in pledging the success of the school. Those who have not forgotten the period of youth — who can forget it? — need not be told that the entrance upon new duties, far from home, and among strangers, seldom fails to bring the sickness of heart under which the average resolution not unfrequently breaks down. A military man, in command of a regiment in our recent war, assured me that homesickness was treated by the physicians as real sickness, and that, at times, it was so threatening that they prescribed for it! He told me that, in one instance, the report of the scouts that the enemy was approaching sent a thrill of relief through

the regiment, in that, horrid as the prospect was, it diverted the minds of new recruits from the greater horror, — thought of the distant home from which they were compulsorily detained. Under any circumstances, however favoring, a young man's first year at a distant school is apt to be one of sore trial. And this is peculiarly distressing on festive days, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the New Year. At such times, so crowded with happy associations, the mind will revert to the old homestead and the gathering of parents, brothers, sisters and friends, about the festive board.

Dr. Fisher and his wife had known by experience the loneliness of a first Thanksgiving at Canton; that is, in any place before new friendships and companionships have been formed. I have a distinct recollection that Mrs. Fisher, in describing the experience, in substance said: "The first Thanksgiving we spent in Canton was the most lonely one that Mr. Fisher and I ever spent together. We took our places at table with our three children, and I was *so* homesick and lonely, having always been accustomed to dining with a table-full of friends on that anniversary." The memory of that loneliness led her to think of the "boys" in the lonely building. If, with her family, the memory of other days was so painful, what must it be to them? And, with the quickness of woman's thought, she determined that for Thanksgiving the "boys" should be her sons. She proposed to her husband that the students be "adopted" for the day, and make the family reunion

at her table. In reply, he left the project wholly with her, as the care would come chiefly upon her, at the same time giving a more than willing consent.

Accordingly, on the return of the next Thanksgiving, she began the "adoption" in due form, and gave a dinner to both the Faculty and students. The next year she divided the company, and had the students on Thanksgiving and the Faculty and other friends on New Year. And for the succeeding twenty years Mrs. Fisher's Thanksgiving and New Year were almost as much of an "institution" as the school itself.

I had learned from many students so much of these annual occasions, so much of the gratitude for the thoughtfulness which they evinced, and of the influence they had in giving success in the Canton struggles, that I could not have failed to make some note of them in this history. But the kindness of former students, and their vivid recollections of the happy anniversary, come greatly to my aid. In recording his own experience, one has given that of other students scattered over the entire period of Dr. Fisher's connection with the school excepting the first year. He writes me: "At first the invitation was to a Thanksgiving dinner, — later to a Thanksgiving 'turkey supper.' The distinction was not wholly one of name, for at the dinner only students were invited, but to the supper each student had the liberty of bringing one, and that one was quite sure to be — I will not finish the sentence!"

One student of the earlier time makes for me the following lively record — that of the "dinner" epoch: —

"After devotional exercises at church or College chapel, the members of the school went to his home, where they were met by the Doctor and Mrs. Fisher with that hearty welcome which could put the most diffident at ease. At dinner, the long table, extending the length of the dining-room, would be loaded with the substantials and delicacies which New Englanders are accustomed to provide on that day. Around this table, with the Doctor and Mrs. Fisher presiding, every member of the school who was in Canton would be present, together with a sprinkling of ladies, if there happened to be a lady in the school.

"After invoking the Divine blessing, so reverently said as to awake the soul of thanks from all, the various viands were tested, until stomachs, disciplined by the common fare of college board, had fully shown their capacity for the task set before them by the culinary skill of Mrs. Fisher and her attendants. Then followed what Dr. Holmes would call 'the feast of reason and the *freshet* of soul,' in the carrying out of the programme previously prepared by the Committee of Arrangements. The Literary Banquet was the quintessence of student brain under full inspiration of the honor of being selected to respond to a toast on that occasion. The listeners were not disposed to let their critical acumen mar this feast, hence the wit was accepted as clear-cut, the sentiment just right, and the poetry sparkling and inspiriting as champagne, about which these embryo-preachers knew probably nothing, except from the lips of others. There was always one speech which made the day memorable, — the words of wisdom, of helpfulness, and of good cheer that came from the grand Christian philosopher, whose large heart would overflow with genial good-humor on the occasion. The evening was sure to be enjoyable to all tastes. When the twilight deepened, and the rooms were lighted, a variety of

entertainments would be successively introduced. For the amusements of the evening, all were much indebted to the prearrangement and untiring efforts of Mrs. Fisher and her daughter. At times, when something particularly funny convulsed the company with laughter, the good Doctor would pass his forefinger and thumb across his upper lip, by that gesture which every student so well remembers, as if to stroke away the laugh waiting to come, and which he did not always succeed in suppressing. Sometimes he would read an amusing sketch, or a choice poem. His fine appreciation of the humorous and of the beautiful, rendered in his deep rich voice, would be a treat indeed to his listeners. And, usually before going home, the company would gravitate to the Doctor's study, and there listen for a time to his analysis of some author, or some book ; a privilege not to be forgotten, but held as an inestimable remembrance. With regret, all saw the hour approach for leaving the delightful home and its hospitable inmates. In most social gatherings, the guests depart at different times. Not so here : all went away at the same time ; this party, like the 'one-horse shay,' broke up all at once.

"It would be difficult to crowd more genuine hospitality, profit, and pleasure into one day, than was furnished to the theological students at the house of Dr. Fisher on Thanksgiving Day."

Another student of a later date has prepared for my use a sketch that adds greatly to the interest this chapter must awaken : —

"The Thanksgiving dinner at Canton has always been a 'red-letter day' in the monotonous round of study and recitation. The interest in the occasion was apparent for weeks before its arrival. The students were sure that the invitations would be forthcoming. They never failed but once in the whole

period of twenty-one years, after the first; and at that time the loss of the invitation to Thanksgiving was more than compensated by an invitation to the wedding of the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Fisher, which took place on the day immediately preceding.

"The students were so sure of their invitations that they met weeks before to prepare some entertainment for the occasion, such as charades, music, etc. And, finally, on the Monday preceding Thanksgiving, after the usual morning prayers in the chapel, — which I fear were not as fervently joined in by the students as usual, — a hush of expectancy would fall upon the students, while Dr. Fisher, with a peculiarly pleasant look, would say: 'Mrs. Fisher sends compliments,' — always including in the invitation the privilege to each student of 'bringing a lady with him.' One year it was humorously hinted that the two lady students might bring gentlemen if they saw fit!

"The students preserved a dignified demeanor till they got outside the chapel door, when a general congratulatory smile would pass round as they went to their several recitations.

"Mrs. Fisher never sat at the table, but looked to see that her guests were thoroughly provided for. When all were satisfied, and I fear more than satisfied, they adjourned to the parlor. The tables were quickly removed, and then a few hours were spent in social conversation, intermingled with whatever entertainment the students had prepared. At last the students would take their leave of host and hostess, feeling as though there was nothing to live for except the memories of that evening and the hopes of another to come next year, — sure for all except the Seniors who graduated before the occasion returned, who as they left would wonder with sadness who would provide for their next Thanksgiving.

"These entertainments were charming to all, even to those who were surrounded by home privileges. But one can imagine what a keen pleasure it must have been to those who

were shut up in their lonely rooms continually. The great charm of the evening lay in the fact that every thing was home-like. The Doctor and Mrs. Fisher would enter into the amusements and conversation as heartily and enjoy it as keenly apparently as any of us."

The several communications that have been sent to me, in regard to these annual occasions, come from different parts of the country, and each writer will here know the contents of others for the first time. I do not, therefore, regret that in regard to the essentials each in some matters repeats another. I give another brief statement: —

"On these annual occasions, his students all about him as his guests, and with the influence of the day consoling all, Dr. Fisher is remembered in one of his best moods. That genial humor which those who had the privilege of seeing him day by day knew he possessed in large measure, was given full play, and the hearty laugh and merry jest we can hear now as they echo from the happy past. A long table extended through the dining and sitting rooms, which occupied the west side of the house; and about that table we all gathered, and, after the reverent and thankful word had been said, partook of the goodly meal provided by Mrs. Fisher, who always graced the day with her cordial and friendly presence.

"After the appetites of all were satisfied, toasts were read and responded to by some of the students for the classes and by the Doctor for the school; and I call to mind that then pleasant jokes and true, sober words fell from his lips to cheer or guide us. We can see him now, standing there in manly strength, yet with the twinkle in his eye which we who were near him have often seen; and we felt toward him not only the respect due to the master mind, but the friendliness won

by the warm human heart. Yes, among the many memories which we cherish is that of Dr. Fisher and his wife, on Thanksgiving Day, among their 'boys.'

"But, it is simple justice to add, these joyful Thanksgiving gatherings, arduous as was the care they brought to the President's wife, were but a fraction of the large service she rendered the school by her motherly care of the 'boys,' as she tenderly called them. At the opening of the school, when there were only a half-dozen students and one teacher, and no apparatus, library, or conveniences; when these students came from comfortable homes and the society of friends to board in the bare, cheerless college-rooms, — had it not been for Mrs. Fisher's energy in enlisting the aid of the Canton ladies, and adding to the bare rooms a certain home-like cheerfulness, many of the students must inevitably have left. From the very first, she endeavored to become personally acquainted with the students. If one was 'homesick' on his arrival, she took him to her own home, where he soon recovered his courage. On several occasions, students, driven by unendurable homesickness, have packed their trunks to go home, when she, by her untiring energy, persuaded them to try a while longer; and so she finally induced them to remain."

A former student, having direct knowledge of the facts, writes me: —

"A great many of the students, when sick, were invited to her home, and were cared for as tenderly as they could have been by their own mothers, until their health had improved sufficiently to warrant a safe return to the school. Some of them have been under her care for several weeks. I recall one who stayed a fortnight under her care, and then, against her advice, insisted upon returning to the school, where, taken sick again, he returned to her house for another fortnight. She nursed another through a raging fever that kept him confined to his

room in her own house for three weeks; ofttimes, in his delirium, she being the only one able to control him. The minor attentions for the comfort of the students are almost numberless. Many of them would go to her for sympathy in their troubles and advice in their perplexities. The confidence they had in her advice was abundantly proven by the frequency with which it was solicited. I think of one who gave his life for his country. He left all his private papers in her charge, with directions for their disposal in case of his death. In short, to describe all she has done for the Canton School would be to give a history of a far greater portion of it than any one of the 'outside world' would suppose. There is many a minister gone from Canton who, if asked what kept him there, would reply that, next to the great teacher at the head, it was Mrs. Fisher's efforts in his behalf."

It means much that for no department of this Memoir have recollections been so promptly and numerously proffered. I regret that my limits forbid the extending of this chapter. For an obvious reason, I specialize an interesting memory from a blind student, for which I have no space.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRIENDS OF THE INSTITUTION.

Primary Conditions in founding Institutions. — That at Canton followed the Rule. — Friends at the Outset. — Potent Influence of Dr. Fisher. — Reticence of Donors. — The larger Gifts. — Dr. Lee's Statement. — The Widows' Mites.

IN all enterprises which depend on large money gifts, the preliminary task is the difficult and trying one, — that of getting public attention. This is not done by circulars, newspaper editorials, and the presentation of subscription books. These indeed are indispensable; in the lack of these nothing will be secured. But, in addition to formal and public appeals, there must be an immense amount of personal interviewing, personal explaining, personal entreating. It is idle to go to a rich man with the sententious statement that the enterprise is a good one. That which is to make a man take out his purse must be worked into his convictions and his sympathies. He must be assured that the project is really needed, that it is feasible, and that there are good probabilities of its success. No man will pour the golden waters into what he fears may prove a sieve. Hence the first step is the creating a proper

public sentiment. That end secured, the result seldom fails.

This history has given many examples in proof that the founding of the Canton Theological School was in accordance with the general law. To make it succeed, no stone was left unturned; and the number of stones to be turned was very great. But, from the first, there were friends of the movement. They began with hundreds, and they in due time came forward with thousands. The great name of Ebenezer Fisher was a tower of strength. It gave confidence. It was patent to sight that such a man was not in Canton without strong and sufficient reasons. Parties who were almost persuaded no sooner saw him than persuasion became conviction, and conviction led to corresponding action.

The fact is not strange, it is characteristic, that the heavier donors of the school had been reticent and unobtrusive. They had even shunned publicity. Dr. Fisher literally teased his Salem friend for his consent to make his gift public: the fact was needed as an "example to others." Through the Rev. J. H. Hartzell, D.D., of Buffalo, as a confederate, I have by a strategy, which I here confess, got at the facts in regard to the gifts of his parishioner, a Mr. A. C. Moore, — a total to the Theological School of near thirty thousand dollars. I ought to add that half as much more has been donated by him to various charities. The inspiration of Jacob Harsen's first offer I have described. The almost startling gifts of John Craig, I have also

noted. Of course, the widows' mites are not forgotten, though the number is too great for individual mention. But some record of the larger gifts I have deemed essential to the proper completeness of this history. On my solicitation, Dr. J. S. Lee gladly collates for me the following statement: —

"I give you this in regard to the larger donors. Jacob Harsen, of the Bleecker Street Church, New York, paid $5,000, Oct. 6, 1858. The Bleecker Street Church gave some $30,000 in all for the University. Among those in New York, and elsewhere, who gave $1,000 each, or more, were George A. Dockstader, $5,000; for whom Dr. Fisher's professorship was named. He gave $100 a year for several years to get a teacher of elocution, and various other sums of which I have no definite knowledge now. Silas C. Herring, New York, who gave $1,000 at first, purchased Dr. Credner's and Rev. S. C. Loveland's Libraries, paid $300 or $400 each year for the purchase of books for many years, paid $5,500 (half) towards the erection of a fire-proof building for the Library, and was really one of the most generous of the earlier donors. F. C. Havemeyer, Thomas Wallace, M. R. Halstead, N. Van Nostrand, Mary Gunn, and Mary Cook, of New York, and L. A. Goodnow, Watertown, New York, made liberal gifts. A. C. Moore, of Buffalo, gave at different times, for specific objects, various sums; and, finally, without solicitation and unexpectedly to the trustees, he endowed my own professorship with $25,000 in May, 1874. John Craig, of Rochester, left in his will $50,000 to the University, which was promptly paid over. Alvinza Hayward, of San Francisco, Cal., gave Dr. Conkey, President of the Board of Trustees, who visited him, a check for $30,000, as a token of his regard for Canton, where he was brought up, — received June 10, 1874. — The influence of Dr. Conkey was felt in many timely offerings. Allen Lyman, of Stockholm, New York, gave $1,000, and his

sister, Mrs. Lorena L. Bicknell, gave $10,000 in 1874. Jeremiah Davis, of Brier Hill, New York, gave $1,000. Lester Taylor, of Fly Creek, New York, has recently given by will, $2,000. Rev. W. S. Balch was a generous donor, for he gave much valuable time and secured large bequests, and in raising the balance of the $25,000, in 1865, charged only his expenses, a little over $300, and declined the ten per cent. which the trustees agreed to pay him. A large number of ministers and laymen gave $100 to $500 each, whose names I do not give."

To the above, I add in form — what I have elsewhere included — the six thousand dollars (besides occasional smaller sums) from Charles A. Ropes, of Salem, Mass. I also note Hon. P. T. Barnum's gift of seven thousand dollars the Centennial year of the denomination: one-half was for the St. Lawrence University. I may add that he also made generous additions to the library. The "struggles for existence" were, therefore, not in vain. Along with the many whom I cannot name, who would naturally shrink from the publicity of the announcement, the men and women above named have been not alone the financial, but the sympathetic, friends of the school, which now rests secure.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLOSING YEARS.

The Evening of Dr. Fisher's Days. — Happy Memories. — Number of his Scholars. — Graduates and Non-Graduates. — Great Success. — Cheerful Letter. — Death of Ellen Estelle. — A severe Blow. — Tests the Firmness of Faith. — Divine Submission. — Rev. O. F. Safford's Recollection.

IT is a profound satisfaction to the many friends of this faithful teacher and guide that the evening of Dr. Fisher's days was serene, peaceful, happy. The endowment of his school up to the line of permanency and an assured usefulness, giving the ground of expectation that other benefactions would in due time greatly extend its sphere and its facilities; the complete success of every one of the special enterprises which had occasioned him so much of solicitude and extra-professional toil; the palpable and enthusiastic love all his students, past and present, bore him; the reverent esteem of neighbors, even to distant towns, irrespective of sect or party; the consciousness that his great experiment had ripened to fruition, — all combined to give content and cheerfulness to the closing days of a toil that was never to be suspended up to the last hour upon earth. He had been successful. I

hardly anticipate, when I make the record, that, including the class of seven which graduated the June following his death (an interval of less than four months), the number of students who had been under Dr. Fisher's instruction made a total of two hundred and one, of which number one hundred and six graduated in due form, and ninety-five were non-graduates. Most of the non-graduates had been in the school more than a year, and many of them two years and longer. In view of the many difficulties surmounted, the success was great. Through great tribulation, the consecrated teacher had entered upon the land that so long was one of simple promise. He knew that he had been successful, and the consciousness made him cheerful, while it moved him to grateful acknowledgment to his Father and his God. And all who loved him, who revere his memory, are grateful in view of the record.

I am, however, describing his professional career, — the close of that career. A precious letter to his Salem friend, Mr. Ropes, makes known the sunlight that cast a halo over these brighter days, in a tone and phrase very different from the many letters extracts of which I have given. Under date, Canton, April 4, 1869, he writes (I give an extract only) : —

" My health is very good this winter. My eyes are not yet well, but are so much improved that I can use them four or five hours in a day. My school is going on well. My number of scholars is thirty-one, and I think them a very promising body of young men. I am glad to say that we have a third

professor just now added to the school, — Rev. J. S. Lee, — who has recently returned from Europe. This is a great satisfaction to me, for our work will, I hope, be much better done, and our labor will not be so severe.

"I have thus, after eleven years, reached the point which, in that direction, I had fixed upon as the object of my labors and hopes, and I give thanks to God that he has granted me to see this success. Day after to-morrow will be eleven years since we moved to Canton. They have been years of self-denial and hard toil, wearing oftentimes to mind and body. I have been many times weary, but not often despondent, nor ever beyond a few hours at a time. Your generosity shed a new light of hope and courage on the darkest hour of my difficulties, and opened the way to this present success, for which may God bless and reward you. And may this school, thus established, be a means of promoting the true life and love of the religion of our Master among men ; and, if it be so, then indeed we may both count what we have given as so much good seed."

In his own family, Dr. Fisher suffered but one domestic sorrow. This was a severe blow, but it only served to chasten his spirit, and reveal the strength of his Christian faith, and his entire submission to the Father's will. This stalwart, strong, massive soul had the tenderness of a child ; and, though he had strength to bear up under affliction, he knew what it was to suffer. I have made record of the death of his youngest child, Ellen Estelle, at Canton, Feb. 4, 1861, at the age of six years. The joy of the father's heart, a presence that filled the home with sunshine, a promise of companionship as his years declined, suddenly taken away, the

paternal grief was not less than the maternal anguish, and Dr. Fisher's home was indeed the house of mourning. But it was the Father above who afflicted him, and this man of faith bowed in trusting submission to a Higher Will and found peace. In the very discriminating and just tribute to Dr. Fisher's memory, paid by the Rev. O. F. Safford, of Cambridge, Mass., at the memorial meeting in Boston, occurs this paragraph, — a gem among gems : —

"No one not utterly unsusceptible could be long in his presence and not be made to feel that there is such a thing as a genuine Christian faith. The best external lesson of faith I ever learned he once taught me ; and it was a lesson without the need of words. During my stay at Canton, he lost a dearly loved daughter, a lovely little girl, who had been the light of his home. One wintry day, when there was snow on the ground and snow in the air, I stood at the foot of the little grave, and Dr. Fisher, the bereaved father, stood at its head. When the little casket had been lowered, the father following it with his eyes, and the harsh gravel was cast upon it, there came a cloud upon his face, — a cloud of anguish, it may be of doubt and unreconciliation. A moment after, however, he instinctively turned his face upward ; the cloud gave place to a cheerful smile. It was as if he saw the sun above the wintry storm. The interpretation of this was plain : the Christian and the father briefly struggled together. The struggle was brief, for the Christian soon triumphed. Many times since have I seen the same smile in his face, and many times has it recalled to me his lesson of faith which he taught me without words."

CHAPTER XX.

"LAST OF EARTH."

Never well. — Increasing Illness. — Premonition. — Ever Ready for the Summons. — Sudden Death. — Dr. Lee's Announcement. — The wide-spread Sorrow. — Memorial Services at Salem, Norwood, and Buffalo. — Allusions to the Event in many Pulpits. — Action of Ministers at the Monday Meeting. — The Funeral Services. — Rev. A. Gunnison's Report. — Meeting of Students at the House. — Action of the Alumni. — "Fisher Memorial Building." — Resolutions at the Ministers' Meeting. — Memorial Service in Boston. — A Denomination in Mourning.

IN all the years of his work at Canton, Dr. Fisher knew that disease had a firm hold upon him. The stalwart frame, and the outward look of vigor and strength, but masked the enemy that was preying within. He always carried the consciousness that he was peculiarly liable to be cut down in a moment. The last time I saw him, a year before his death, I was so struck with his ruddy appearance, that I exclaimed, "Why, do you feel as well as you look?" His answer was, "No," and, putting his hand near his heart, he added, "at times there is something not just right here." But he did not describe the symptoms, and I thought it not well to ask questions. Some years before

his decease, he suffered a slight attack, which, if not paralytic, was suggestive of it; and for a while his face showed some abnormal condition in the facial muscles. Then he was troubled with his eyes, and to spare them refrained from writing, Mrs. Fisher often acting as his amanuensis. The last year of his life he made use of the type-writer, not so much to relieve his hands as his sight. He was not well. With health and strength enough for the full and earnest discharge of his duties, and by no means technically ill, he was far from having the vigor of sound health. But this troubled him not. His anxiety was to round out twenty-one years of service at the head of the school which he had literally made. Beyond that he was not at all solicitous. At any moment he was ready should his Lord call him to His rest.

That moment approached. I shall never forget the emotion with which, on the morning of Friday, Feb. 21, 1879, at the hour of eleven, I opened a despatch, which Mrs. Fisher had authorized should be sent me in her name. Without the remotest suspicion of the contents, in sad and impressive surprise, I read the words, "Dr. Fisher died this morning of heart complaint, while on his way to the school." He died suddenly, with no immediate premonition, at about 8.30, A. M., just as he had reached the Seminary building. Dr. Lee, with a heavy heart, communicated the following to the denominational paper, the "Christian Leader," writing under date, Feb. 21: —

"With grief unutterable, I sit down to communicate to you the death of the President of our Theological School. Dr. Fisher started this morning to go to the College, as usual, to open the school at 8.45, and when he had nearly reached the door, he fell. A student near him raised him up, and asked him if he slipped. 'No,' he replied, 'I fainted,' and he again sank down. Several students near lifted him up, and carried him into one of the College rooms, when he gasped a few times and was dead! Professors and students were gathered around him when he breathed his last. Two physicians were called immediately, who pronounced it a case of the heart disease. With this he had been troubled for a long time, and lived for years with the idea that he might be taken suddenly away. Yet he had been able to perform his duties in the Theological School up to the time of his death. No premonitory symptoms indicated so sudden a termination of his labors. He heard recitations with his usual vigor yesterday, and last evening attended Dr. Weaver's conference and prayer meeting, and spoke freely. This morning he seemed as well as usual when he started for his daily labor, conversed with friends on the way, did some business, and then went on towards the College. He died, as he desired, with the harness on. He was faithful to the duties of his calling even unto the end."

I need not add that on many minds and hearts the sad and startling intelligence made a profound impression. All who knew Dr. Fisher, painfully felt that a giant had fallen. There was deep and wide-spread mourning in the Israel of the Universalist Church; and the bereavement was felt far outside of sectarian boundaries. Impromptu expressions of sorrow came from many lips.

On the succeeding Sunday, memorial services were held in the churches at Salem and Norwood (formerly South Dedham), of which the deceased had in earlier years been the pastor. At the Salem church (I quote the "Christian Leader") "a portrait of the deceased was placed before the altar. Dr. E. C. Bolles, the pastor, read a selection of Scripture so pertinent that it almost seemed that the inspired pen saw the good man in prophetic vision. A most appropriate discourse was given, in which the work of Dr. Fisher in the Salem parish was faithfully recognized, and the specialty of his great mission at Canton was delineated." In Buffalo, where Dr. Fisher had found great friends in the days of trial, the Universalist pastor, Rev. L. J. Fletcher, D.D., held a memorial service; and in his discourse he made a careful and extended analysis of the character and work of the deceased, paying a high tribute to his exalted worth. In very many Universalist churches the services on that Sunday morning were suggested by the solemn event. And of the many pastors who had revered the eminent dead as their former instructor, very few failed on that day to remember their benefactor in prayer and in meditation.

The ministers of the Universalist churches of Boston and vicinity hold, every Monday morning, a Ministers' Meeting, at the rooms of the Universalist Publishing House, on which occasions they usually discuss some theme of doctrine or of method which pertains to their

professional work. But, as they met on the Monday succeeding the sad news, but one thought and one theme absorbed every mind and heart. A committee was appointed to express the love and reverence which all the ministers bore to the memory of the dead. Dr. Sawyer, the chairman at the next meeting, March 3, submitted resolutions of appreciation, grateful recognition of eminent service to the church, and of condolence, which were unanimously approved. And a committee was also appointed to arrange a Memorial Service, which was held Wednesday evening, March 5, at Columbus Avenue Church. There was also a special call on the graduates of Canton who were present to take formal and appropriate action, which was done. Indeed, the theme which dominated every other on that Monday was the one suggested by the great sorrow in which all shared.

The funeral service was held on the afternoon of Tuesday, Feb. 25. The Rev. A. Gunnison, of Brooklyn, a former student of Dr. Fisher, was present, and communicated to the "Christian Leader" a full report of the services. I quote and condense: —

"It was to be expected," Mr. Gunnison wrote, "that Dr. Fisher's death should profoundly stir this community, and that, irrespective of sect, the day of his funeral should be observed as a day of public mourning. The press in this section gave elaborate editorials on his life and the circumstances of his death; the public schools in this and adjoining towns were closed. The State Normal School at Potsdam suspended exer-

cises, its faculty in a body attending the funeral. Every store in the village was closed; the college was draped in mourning; and over every home the shadow of his death rested with the weight of a personal bereavement. The weather was literally cold, the snow lay deep within the streets, the trains were blocked, and several graduates, on their way to the services, were unable to reach town until several hours after the interment, while others, after finding when nearly here that they could not get through in season, turned back.

"The body lay in the parlor of the home, surrounded by the students who had so often enjoyed its gracious hospitality. The pastor of the deceased, the Rev. George S. Weaver, D.D., conducted the services at the house, at the conclusion of which the procession, composed of the trustees, faculty, theological and college students, citizens, clergy, family, and friends, moved to the church, the body attended by six of his students as bearers. In the solemn service in the presence of the vast congregation, Dr. Weaver read appropriate Scripture; Dr. O. Cone (long associated with the deceased) offered prayer; and fitting and tender service was rendered by the choir. Addresses, each having a special application, followed, from Dr. Cone, Dr. Lee, and Dr. A. G. Gaines, President of the College department. These addresses — discriminating, tender, affectionate, and just — were printed in the 'Christian Leader.' Prayer followed, offered by Rev. J. Crehore, a former pastor.

"The coffin was then placed in the vestibule, and the vast audience passed slowly by it. Many eyes were wet with tears as they looked upon the familiar face, unmarked as it was by the lines of protracted sickness, but round, calm, serene, as if in sleep. The long procession then formed, and, in the face of a severe storm, through the bitter cold, bore the body to its resting-place; and there, in the snow around the grave, the students and friends gathered, a brief prayer was offered, and amid the deepening shadows of the approaching night they made there in 'God's Acre' a lonely mound which, through

the coming years, will be a sacred spot to that vast throng of faithful men who have been helped by his teaching and inspired by the purity and devotion of his life."

Such was the last of earth to the great and good man whose history I have sought to portray. Lacking but a few months, the coveted twenty-one years of service were "rounded out." The battle was fought. The victory was won. Ebenezer Fisher rested from his labors.

I again quote the Rev. Mr. Gunnison: —

"On the following morning, the theological students assembled as usual in Dr. Fisher's room. His vacant chair stood in its familiar place. The Bible, hymn-book, roll-book, were as he had left them. A solemn hush brooded over the little assembly as the students sang the songs that he had loved. Professor Cone read the Scriptures, Rev. M. R. Leonard, a graduate of the first class, offered prayer; and then addresses by Professors Cone, Lee, and Leonard; by graduates Gunnison, Weeks, Fraser, Couden; and by many of the students, — followed, all of them in voices trembling and broken with grief and amid thick-falling tears. The hour was one of deepest solemnity. The spirit of the departed seemed to fill every heart; and the vacant chair, though mute, stirred every heart to loyalty to his memory."

On Wednesday, the Alumni took important action. A Monument Committee (Rev. Messrs. Gunnison, Leonard, and Cone) was instructed to place at the grave a suitable Monument, with appropriate ceremony, at the succeeding Commencement, — the same to be a gift of past students. A Committee for the erection of a "Fisher Memorial Building" (Rev. Messrs. Leon-

ard, Pullman, Gunnison, and Conger, and Messrs. W. A. Poste and A. Z. Squires) was instructed to raise funds and prosecute the work, as a larger memorial and needful addition to the institution. I defer full particulars to an appendix.

The Boston Memorial Service was held as appointed. I condense from the "Christian Leader": —

"At the hour of seven, P.M., the exercises began with a voluntary by the organ and choir. The Rev. C. A. Skinner read selections from the Scriptures. Rev. Dr. A. J. Patterson offered prayer. The hymn 719, 'Church Harmonies,' was then sung by choir and congregation. Dr. Sawyer then made a brief address, in which he classified Dr. Fisher with the great and noble men whereof every church has its heritage, and in touching accents alluded to his official and personal relations to him when he was installed as the head of the Canton School. He announced the several topics and speakers; and the addresses — all of which were published in the 'Christian Leader'— came in the following order: 'Biographical Sketch,' by Rev. Richard Eddy; the 'Character and Influence of the Deceased,' by Rev. O. F. Safford; the 'Denominational Relations and Influence of the Deceased,' by Dr. A. A. Miner."

In Boston, as in Canton, the solemn theme gave thought and inspiration to every speaker; and careful analysis, discriminate eulogy, grateful recognition of eminent service to the Church of Christ, and particularly to the Universalist branch of that church, gave direction and character to the memorial hour. In literal truth, a whole denomination was in mourning for an irreparable loss in the death of Ebenezer Fisher.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRIBUTES.

Tributes proffered for this Volume. — From Dr. O. Cone. — Dr. J. S. Lee. — Rev. M. Goodrich. — Dr. I. M. Atwood. — Dr. J. G. Adams.

I MIGHT regret that the limits within which it is needful that I restrict this memoir forbid my use of the many discourses, speeches, and eulogies which followed the decease of Dr. Fisher, but for the reflection that these have appeared in print, most of them in the "Christian Leader," and to some extent in all the denominational papers. But a few that have been volunteered for my use in the preparation of this volume, and which for the first time now appear, are gratefully received, and are herewith submitted.

The following full and critical estimate is from the pen of Dr. O. Cone, for many years closely connected with the head of the Canton School: —

"The impression of Dr. Fisher's personality can never be forgotten by any one who ever stood in his presence. It was a happy blending of rugged strength and sensitive tenderness, of rigid justice and melting kindness, of strong self-assertion and graceful modesty, of the robustness and aggressive force of the pioneer and the calmness and repose of the philosopher. He

seemed strength clothed in gentleness and crowned with benignity. I shall never forget the impression he made upon me the first time I ever saw him. It was at the New York State Convention, in Troy, in 1863. I think some resolutions had been read, the purport of which was that the 'young men,' having outgrown the theology of the 'fathers,' should take a new departure and found a policy in harmony with the progressive spirit of the age. The discussion which followed was in a fair way to become heated and bitter, when a large man, with white locks and a bald head, rose with a quick, nervous movement, and, with a slight tremor in his voice and a somewhat rigid cast of the strong features, began to speak. He spoke at first with a measured movement, and in a low tone, like a father talking with serious earnestness to his boys; but at length, grasping the subject with a closer hold, he began to speak with animation and in a firmer tone, while his whole bearing and expression of features corresponded with the strong movement of his thought. I cannot now recall the matter of that short speech, but the effect and impression are not to be forgotten. It was searching, comprehensive, unsparing, yet tempered with such a spirit of paternal mildness, and so pervaded by justice and fairness, that it was felt that nothing more remained to be said.

"The impression which he always left in handling any subject was that of a vigorous intellect guided by a wise judgment and informed by a rugged common-sense. He had no taste for refined speculations, and never pursued the nicer distinctions of metaphysics with especial fondness. I remember that he once borrowed of me a work of a rather abstruse and speculative character, and returned it in a day or two with the remark: '*It is too far off for me!*'

"In like manner the doctor was accustomed to regard theological questions from a practical rather than from a speculative and critical point of view. He handled them in a large, bold way, and was a strong reasoner on those which he had

studied. But he had no taste for historical criticism, and his theology was made up without regard to its conclusions. He once said to me that it was impossible for him to doubt any thing that the Evangelists wrote, so contrary was such a doubt to his settled convictions and his habits of thought. And his want of interest in such questions as the authorship of the fourth Gospel, is illustrated by a remark which I once heard him make to a class, that this Gospel was received as genuine by all except *a few scribblers*. The speculations of the Tübingen critics were 'too far off' from the line of thought on which he was steadfastly pursuing the objects of his life, to receive from him more than a glance and an expression of impatient contempt.

"This tendency of his mind is further illustrated by a judgment which I once heard him pronounce on the book of Revelation, and his grounds for the same. He said he did not think the book properly *canonical*, nor written by the Apostle John, *because its spirit was not in harmony with that of the Christian religion.* Thus he was accustomed to cut many a Gordian knot of critical intricacies by a vigorous stroke of sense.

"It is well known how near to the heart of Dr. Fisher lay the interests and prosperity of the Theological School. And if in its darkest days he never quite despaired of its success, it was in part because he had a right and clear perception of its value to the church. He knew very well that it was destined to shape to a large degree the future of the denomination ; and he was profoundly impressed with the responsibility that rested on the Faculty. I remember how once, in a long and confidential conversation about the school, he touched upon this subject with that tremulous reserve with which the mind naturally approaches a sacred theme, and, after dwelling upon it with feeling for some time, remarked : 'If our people knew what power they put into our hands, they would be more solicitous and more watchful of our work.' He labored to establish the

success of the Theological School on the foundation of thorough training and conscientious work on the part of the Faculty, and did not believe in sensational expedients. When the new Theological School was established at Tufts College, many of the friends of the Canton School were solicitous lest that should be prejudicial to the success of this. But the Doctor never seemed anxious on this subject, nor did he regard the eastern school as a rival of that at Canton. He was accustomed only to say: 'If we do our work well, we shall prosper.'

"The government of the Theological School, under Dr. Fisher's administration, cannot perhaps be more accurately characterized than by the word *paternal*. The venerable aspect of the President, his kindly interest in the students, and the gracious benignity that marked his intercourse with them, spread through the school the influence and the sentiment of the Christian family. Few rules were needed, and such as the Faculty had agreed upon often went unread for years. A dignified reserve marked all his relations with the school. He had a quick appreciation of the humorous without often indulging in humor. He always bore an aspect of serious earnestness. He was very prompt and methodical in all the details of administration. His bell was rung at the hour, 'sharp,' and all the students who may read these lines will recall the inimitable manner and bearing with which he conducted the opening exercises, — the kind of resolute expedition with which every thing was discharged, and the way he had of pronouncing the concluding words: 'The classes may go.' The necessary severity of the extreme penalty ever inflicted in the school — the Reprimand — was so tempered with wise counsel and paternal kindness that its effect was always salutary and helpful. The offender on whom it had been inflicted felt indeed that his faults and weaknesses had been exposed with keen analysis and unsparing severity; but he came out of the ordeal with the feeling that the hand of a father had been laid upon him.

"Perhaps in no respect was the influence of our lamented teacher more helpful than in the enthusiasm of Christian manhood which he inspired in the young men of the Theological School. His personality was so charged with faith, earnestness, and consecration, that the nature must have been very unsusceptible which, in any considerable intercourse with him, was not quickened by his spirit. There was this quality in his influence, that it never made *imitators*. Of those who have been under his instruction he has many followers, but I do not know a single imitator. This is attributable in part to the absence in him of merely brilliant qualities; but it is chiefly due, I think, to the fact that he made the spirit rather than the form of his personality felt by those who came under his influence. For, with all his pronounced individuality, he was eminently modest and had the secret of making himself felt without being in the least obtrusive. And all those to whose education he has contributed will bear witness that, while he impressed them with the strength of his own convictions, he put no shackles upon their minds, but trained them to the spirit and bearing of free men in Christ."

In connection with other important matters, which I have given in preceding pages, the following from Dr. J. S. Lee I reserve for this connection: —

"I owe much to my twenty years' daily intercourse with him. It stimulated my mind and promoted my mental growth, to talk and reason, and exchange thoughts with him. I often differed honestly from him, reasoned and argued, and strenuously maintained my position, yet we were ever friends. He was fair and candid and careful in stating his propositions, and I learned much from him that was valuable. He was not afraid to acknowledge his deficiencies, but he had confidence enough in himself to believe that he could remedy them. When he was invited to take charge of the Theological School,

he said that he knew only one language, and that not very well. But few persons studied more carefully and industriously than he, and in a short time he became one of the profoundest theologians of the denomination. He was not simply a reader of books: he was a thinker. He digested what he read, and then used it to illustrate and amplify his lessons. I shall be grateful that my lot in life was cast so long with him."

I have reserved for this connection the following from the Rev. M. Goodrich: —

"It is now seventeen years since I left Canton: of course my interest in the school ceased not with my resignation. Deeply sympathizing with Professor Fisher, I aided in one critical hour in raising funds to endow a professorship, and otherwise strove to assist the school, as kind letters from him acknowledge. But I seldom met him, and heard with deep emotion of his death. Waiting one evening, last February, at a station in Boston for hours, I sought to while away the time by reading a newspaper. Suddenly my eye lighted on a brief paragraph which told of the death of Professor Fisher; and I recollected a story told me in Potsdam relative to the decease of Silas Wright. My informant was a lady, and she told me that her father was riding into the village of Canton, on the morning following the death of that Statesman. He had not heard of the bereavement, 'but,' said he, 'as I entered the village, I knew that some calamity had happened. There was a hush in the very air, and an appearance of sadness that made me ask, What is the matter?' And I felt that a like hush stilled the atmosphere of Canton, a like pall fell upon it, when Ebenezer Fisher faltered on the steps, and died in the halls, of that building, where for so many years he had reverently trained youth for the Christian ministry."

The Rev. I. M. Atwood, D.D., — successor to Dr. Fisher in the Presidency of the Canton Theological

School, — made a note in the "Christian Leader," to which he appends a brief paragraph for my present use. Together they make the following: —

"A grand man, made up in a large and noble fashion, with paternal benignity in his face and a note of sonorous warning in his voice, able, acute, aggressive, unmovable, the sturdy strength and wintry rigor of his nature relieved by a certain charm of tenderness which affected one like the scent of sweet flowers amid the majesty of the primeval woods, in his preaching a strain of deep sincerity which made the hearer feel the solemn reality of those things about which there is so much superficial prattle, — a great, brave, patient spirit, loyal to the truth, trustworthy as a star, and of such a breadth and strength of moral build as made him an imposing Christian force in the community, — such to our thought was Ebenezer Fisher, who fell asleep Friday morning, Feb. 21, having just passed his sixty-fourth birthday.

"To this, my acquaintance with the place of his residence and the theatre of his work, enables me to supplement two remarks: (1) That the community in which he lived and labored for so large a part of his life is penetrated with a subtle influence, an aroma, from his strong yet gentle nature. This was strikingly exemplified to me by the remark of a man whom I met in a shop here. 'Well, sir,' said he, 'Dr. Fisher was one good man. *It was a great thing for him just to live in a place.*' (2) That Dr. Fisher was a great teacher of truth because he was himself so full of truth. Character tells everywhere, but in no pursuit more powerfully than in teaching. Dr. Fisher's words were not *vox et præterea nihil.* They were, like his Master's, spirit and life."

The Rev. John G. Adams, D.D., places in my hands the following, with which I must conclude a chapter that could easily be extended: —

"The clear, strong intellect, and large-heartedness of Dr. Fisher, were eminent qualifications for his work as a preacher and teacher of the gospel. Every attentive thinker who listened to him was interested and edified by his speech. Plainness, directness, earnestness, and aptness of illustration, were in his sermons ; and his versatility of mental endowments rendered him an able leader and counsellor on all occasions calling for his aid or advice. He was a standing reproof to all inordinate pretension or self-sufficiency. We were not a little amused as well as gratified, at an ordaining council, a few years ago, with the quiet but most forcible answers which he gave to a young minister, who was moved to question him somewhat closely on certain of the Old Testament records and affirmations. But in his keenness there was the utmost courtesy and tenderness. Firm as a rock in his convictions of truth, he was one of the most candid inquirers after more of its revelations. Breadth, depth, massiveness, all were enstamped upon him. He seemed to me a kind of Christianized Plato."

CHAPTER XXII.

ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER.

A First Impression. — Corrected on Acquaintance. — The Biographer's Temptation. — A Sensitive Nature. — Given to sharp Retort. — Profound Sincerity. — Pre-eminently a man of Faith. — Unappreciative of Sceptical Difficulties. — Religious Convictions Realities. — Hatred of Pretence. — An Incident. — Logical Power. — Distaste of Speculative Philosophy. — Combination of Gifts. — As a Preacher. — Needed a Practical End. — Style. — Great Gift for Illustration. — Glows with Metaphor. — A Humorist. — Instance of Humor. — Conservative. — The Bible authoritative. — Strength of Universalist Convictions. — Name to be honored. — An Example to emulate.

I VIVIDLY recall the first impression made upon me by the man whose career I have sought to describe. In the spring of 1849, at the time residing in Louisville, Kentucky, I read an article in the "Universalist Quarterly," entitled, "Memory and Conscience in the Future State," signed "E. F." Some comments upon this article, I think in the "Trumpet," gave the name for which the initials stood. The article impressed me as acute and somewhat novel in its thought. I set it down as the production of a good thinker and a facile writer. The name was new. After what seems to be a general instinct, I formed an image of the man. I pictured him as thin, short of stature, with black eyes, and a

head of heavy black hair! The following spring I came to Boston. The date of my return was that of Anniversary Week. I called on the Rev. Mr. (now Dr.) A. A. Miner, at his house on Green Street. Entering the parlor, as I did before Mr. Miner appeared, I saw sitting there a large man, quite bald, with a round, massive head, light eyes, very light complexion, stalwart of frame, — evidently a man of both mental and physical strength. He at once called me by name, — which he must have overheard at the door, — adding: "I heard of you some years since. Did you not preach a few months in Ellsworth and Bucksport? I see you do not know me." He was about to relieve my curiosity when Mr. Miner, entering the room, introduced me to "Rev. Ebenezer Fisher." I was surprised beyond measure. Never had I formed a "first impression" more utterly falsified on acquaintance. But the first interview gave me an impression which thirty years of subsequent familiarity have confirmed and deepened, — that of strength of intellect with weight of character.

The incidents collated in these pages must in their aggregate significance enable each reader to form a judgment of the character of Ebenezer Fisher. But it belongs to the biographer to add to the estimate given by others his own conception of the distinguishing traits of the man. This I have already done in a fractional and disconnected way, in the comments added at various connections in the preceding pages. Briefly let me attempt a consistent and symmetrical whole.

The biographer who has esteemed, and who yet reveres, the person whose history he seeks to sketch, must beware of the temptation to ill-considered and injudicious praise. A perfect character never commands full assent. It is at once presumed that the partiality of friendship has perverted or else withheld facts. The saying is very trite that no man is perfect. It is true. Abundant observation shows that great strength is apt to be compensated with weaknesses equally marked. Ebenezer Fisher was a man, and therefore he was not faultless. I have thought him, in extreme cases, rather impatient under criticism. He did not always — I think he did usually — remember the proverb, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Strong in every phase of character, he was strong in his indignation; and when suffering from the sting of what he believed to be injustice, he could phrase a philippic in terms quite the reverse of gentle. There were contingencies in which much smaller men, and much his inferior in character, could have given him wise counsel. He hated injustice, — what he thought to be such, — and when himself the victim he hated it none the less. In the intensity of his feeling and the scathing of his rhetoric, I think he was at times somewhat at fault. But I do not think that he himself suspected this. Had that difficult phase of self-knowledge been clear to him, I do not doubt that he would have held himself in perfect check. For in all things he was sincere, truthful, honest. There was in his nature not a particle of guile. Indeed, it

sometimes seemed to me that the very soundness of his moral nature unfitted him to be duly lenient. His hatred of duplicity was a passion. Rather than have been guilty of an act of conscious wrong, he would have severed his right hand. Possibly he demanded of poor human nature more than average human nature is equal to, though never more than was simple and obvious to his own more exalted gifts.

I fully endorse — had I the gift I would more strongly state — what his many eulogists have singled out as his dominant trait. He was a man of religious faith. God, Christ, immortality, salvation, heaven, were to him no unmeaning words. It was said of Jonathan Edwards that when he arose to preach he seemed to the people as if he had just seen God. Ebenezer Fisher literally had his conversation in heaven. He had the tone and the expression of one who had seen and known the things whereof he affirmed. Indeed, the strength of his faith was the one enervating element in his otherwise masterly and comprehensive criticisms. He really could not understand the doubter, for himself had never known doubt. The criticism which created scepticism had never affected him. Hence, the criticism usually needful for the removing of scepticism he never needed. I must think that in some things he failed in treating unbelief, for the reason that he did not personally feel the necessity of resisting it. The principles of the New Testament were to his soul the bread of life and the water of life. Was not this

knowledge? Must he search, and try, and speculate, touching the things he personally knew? I remember the drift of an essay once read in his hearing, in the Essex Circle. Its points were that Christianity demands a perfect life; that some souls are so imperfect, and their attainments so crude, that such a standard is literally beyond their conception, and of course beyond their reach; and hence that for the time and the existing conditions some allowance must be made. Is the law that binds him of ten talents as exacting when applied to him of but a single talent? I remember that he refused even to answer the question! He did not consider it a legitimate one. He disposed of it with an earnest, almost solemn citation: "Be ye therefore perfect!" In fact, he could not enter into the feelings of one who might with serious intent submit such a problem.

Faith lays hold upon God and eternal life. Dr. Fisher was therefore a devout man. His belief in God was with the heart as well as with the understanding. Wherever he appeared, an atmosphere of healthy piety enfolded him, radiated from him. There was something of worship in his mere companionship. In his life as in his thought he made the distinction between morality and religion. He knew that love of a brother is different from the love of God, yet he knew that he who failed to love God would also fail to love his brother.

On all matters moral and religious his intellect was keen. Hollow pretence seldom imposed upon him. He knew the charlatan at sight; he therefore literally

loathed pretence. He could not endure the popular speaker who aimed for effect while he was reckless of the conditions of a just effect. Here I must relate an incident. A certain popular minister gave a lecture. I was delighted with it; I thought it grand, solid, and eloquent. Stating my impression to Mr. Fisher, he almost offended me with his blunt rejoinder: "He is a quack, shallow and frothy." Of course the logic of this was not complimentary to my own discernment, and I confess I did not take it with a relish. I sought to contest the censure, but I made no impression. But there was a sequel, in which it appeared that neither of us was at fault. About six weeks after, he met me in a Salem library, and with his expressive smile he exclaimed: "Well, you probably were not wrong in your opinion of that lecture. He stole it!" The lecture *was* "solid, grand, and eloquent," but it was a plagiarism. The experience serves my present purpose: it brought out Dr. Fisher's hatred of pretence.

Understanding by logic the process which educes a conclusion from conceded premises, I think Dr. Fisher had few equals as a logician. He could reason; he could see when others reasoned. Any flaw in the ratiocination he detected on the instant.

There were some departments of intellectual life for which he had no sympathy. In the great essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, he saw nothing to admire, — but little to tolerate. He thought him disintegrating and incoherent. We sat together one evening as Emerson

read a lecture on "Fate." I felt that the hearer must reserve his judgment; that he must take the lecture as suggestion rather than doctrine; and that its special mission was to quicken thought rather than to impart it. I think so now. But my companion's impatience was manifest: it rose to disgust. At the close he made the terse comment: "It is immoral." He had as little sympathy for the speculative thinker. He saw nothing practical in the Hamiltons, the Reids, and the Cousins. Nor did he see that the study of them was a wholesome discipline. He once said to me: "The whole of them are not worth so much as one of Lord Bacon's Essays." These, I may add, were his ideals of philosophic wisdom. He made the complaint that students of that school of thinkers were apt to be pedantic, impracticable, and lifeless. "But," said I, "Dr. Ballou and Dr. Walker have studied that kind of lore: you cannot say that they are impracticable and pedantic." He refused to amend his criticism. I candidly confess that the many mental gifts which had been so largely conferred upon him did not include, in any large measure, the one whose creations never evoked his sympathy.[1]

In truth, the greatness of Dr. Fisher was in a combination of gifts. Others excelled him in one or

[1] I base this judgment on Dr. Fisher as I knew him prior to 1860. Former students, now of the special attainments to justify them in forming an estimate, assure me that, on becoming a teacher of metaphysics, he disclosed therefor an extraordinary faculty; that he profoundly appreciated Sir William Hamilton, and had the warmest admiration of that scholastic philosopher.

another faculty, in one or another attainment; but rarely does any one person combine so many and in such ample proportions. But, as a result of this combination and ready control of many talents, he was a critic beyond that of any other whom I have intimately known. That was his specialty as a teacher, — a specialty that in such a profession is mighty and commanding.

As a preacher, Dr. Fisher had the very majesty of strength. When a specified end was before him, he concentrated upon it with marvellous effect. If he meant something in particular, he cleared the way of all obstructions. He ruled out superfluous ideas not less than superfluous words. And he was sure to carry his point and to carry his hearers with it.

When, however, no particular end was sought; when no clearly defined target concentrated his aim; when he merely sought to unfold a thought, yet having in contemplation no specific practical result, — he was not always interesting. He would at times be somewhat mystical, his ideas lacking clearness, and their enunciation directness. In such pulpit efforts his saving grace was in the majesty of his character. If his utterances were not always understood, *he* was never ambiguous.

Dr. Fisher was a student of style. His best of published essays,[1] as I estimate them, was an article with

[1] In his biographical sketch, read at the Memorial service in Boston, the Rev. Richard Eddy gave a summary of Dr. Fisher's published writings. They are as follows: "Memory and Conscience in

that title, published in the "Universalist Quarterly." He knew the secrets of pure and expressive rhetoric. His writings, when on themes that particularly moved him, were vivacious, bright, and pungent. He literally revelled in tropes and metaphors. I have often made this statement in regard to him, and it has not unfrequently occasioned some surprise. Indeed, there was so much of the matter-of-fact in his composition, he so habitually exemplified the mathematical axiom that

the Future State;" "Old Testament Prophecies concerning Christ;" "Spirituality;" "Style;" "The Will;" "The Righteous and the Wicked;" "Heathen Views of the Punishment of Sin;" "Lessons from Nature;" "The Intercession of Christ;" "Geology and the Fall;" "Credibility and Inspiration of the New Testament;" "The Destiny of the Creature;" "Of Sin;" "The Moral Sense." These appeared in the "Universalist Quarterly," between and including the years 1849 and 1876. Sermons on the following named themes appeared in the "Trumpet," the dates ranging from November, 1849, to October, 1857; "The Evils of a Transient Ministry," preached before the Boston Association; "Substantive Faith," a sermon to the Boston Association Home Missionary Society; "A righteous Life brings a full Age and a peaceful Death," funeral sermon for Mrs. Putnam, of Salem; and "Gradual Evolution of the Divine Purpose," a sermon before the Norfolk County Association. To this list may be added his address to his first graduating class, published in the "Christian Ambassador," and several minor papers in the denominational journals. I particularly note "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation: a discussion between Rev. E. Fisher, D.D., and Rev. J. H. Walden, on the proposition, 'All men will be finally saved.' Boston: Universalist Publishing House. 1869." Mr. Walden died before the limits agreed upon for the discussion were reached. In this pamphlet Dr. Fisher's argumentative ability appears in its full vigor.

the shortest line connecting two points is a straight one, that it seemed impossible that he should indulge in an indiscretion, even in his rhetoric. Once, after he had read an essay in the Essex Circle, the first critic exclaimed: "Why, it seems to me that Brother Fisher has taken a notion to be figurative to-day." He knew his own taste and habit, and in reply said: "Brother Fisher is always figurative." Literally he was; his mind seemed to float in an atmosphere of similes. Figures sparkled, at times flamed, all along the thread of his discourse. The gift was a great one. It gave him power; it relieved the dryness of discussion; it pleased while it instructed and elevated. A young man once preached in his hearing on the passage from moral death unto life. Mr. Fisher was pleased, but he could not restrain a slight criticism: "Why did you not think of the man half drowned coming back to consciousness?" Himself overflowing with comparisons, analogies, even allegories, he felt the lack of them to be a serious defect.

Dr. Fisher was a humorist. His clerical dignity was never compromised, but he was at times full of fun. He loved to hear stories; he loved to tell them. He was fond of companionship, and he made every social circle that he entered radiant with happiness. Of course this humorist must at least once in his life act the part of a "match-maker." There was a certain man of his acquaintance, and also a certain woman, whom he deemed admirably fitted for each other. He said so.

He meant to bring them together. This was his device. There was a church fair; the fair had a post-office. A letter came to that man, clearly in the chirography of Mr. Fisher. It was covered with lines, no one of which connected with any other, — no one of which was complete. In his amazement, the man showed to others the singular epistle. A letter also came to that woman, clearly in the chirography of Mr. Fisher. It also was filled with lines having no reciprocal and interpreting relations. In her amazement she exhibited to others the curious sheet. The secret was soon explained. The man and the woman were brought together, and it appeared that a line of one letter was properly followed and made intelligible by a line of the other letter. In less than six months that man and that woman were husband and wife. Had not Ebenezer Fisher the invention of the humorist?[1]

[1] An anecdote illustrative of Dr. Fisher's ready humor came to the knowledge of the Rev. L. C. Browne, of Honeoye Falls, New York, who puts me in possession of it. It is the following: —

"In early life Dr. Fisher was a member of the legislature of his native State. At that time the laws of Maine prohibited the intermarriage of white and colored persons. A bill was introduced to repeal that prohibition, and Mr. Fisher advocated the repeal. An opposer of the bill intimated that he would consent to the repeal in Mr. Fisher's case, if his tastes for marriage ran in that direction, but would adhere to the old law for society at large. This occasioned some merriment at young Fisher's expense. In rejoinder, Mr. Fisher said he did not advocate the repeal on account of any personal inclination toward such intermarriage, and presumed that no other friend of the repeal was governed by such a motive. But if his honorable opponent felt the need of legal restraint against that kind

I have said that the tendencies of Dr. Fisher's mind were conservative. The statement holds in regard to his beliefs not less than his actions. He had an instinctive reverence for the past; he had little confidence in theories that find their principal claim in their novelty; he believed in growth, slow growth, rather than in sudden creations. The experiences of ages went for a great deal, in his estimation. None of the rationalistic theories troubled him, either in science or in theology. The first year of my acquaintance with him, a remarkable book — "The Vestiges of the Creation" — was creating some stir. His view of it was based upon what he deemed its effects: "Were the truth known, I doubt not, it would appear that thousands have lost not only their faith but their peace of mind also from the reading of that book." This was a comment in answer to a question I put to him. The radical prides himself on contempt of consequences. He goes to the fountain-head and takes what he discovers to be truth, "though the heavens fall:" that is his boast. The conservative does not accept the notion that the truth of theories can be determined without looking at results. Dr. Fisher included consequences in his search for truth. I think he carried this conservative spirit to an extreme.

He accepted the Bible as the man of his counsel,

of union, he would support an amendment with a proviso for his individual case, and making him an exception to the general liberty. Then the laugh was louder on the other side."

the criterion of belief. The external argument, which builds upon prophecy fulfilled and miracle, — the constituents of which are items of history, — he deemed conclusive. He had no fear that hostile criticism could ever shake that support. Yet he lived and rejoiced in the internal argument, — that which affirms a mutual correspondence between the intuitions of the soul and the essentials of Christian doctrine. And he did not hesitate to say that this internal proof, the witness within, was the final one, and that he who had it was firmly grounded in the Christian faith.

He was not sectarian in any meaning of the word that can reasonably give offence. He never deemed Christianity and Universalism convertible terms. He never claimed that any human interpretation can include the fulness of God's truth manifest in Jesus Christ. His first aim as a preacher was to make Christians; as a teacher, to make Christian ministers. But, next to that, he was set for the defence of the Universalist interpretation of the Divine Word. Through great tribulation he had come out of the fiery furnace of the Calvinistic doctrine into the light and joy of God's impartial grace. His change of faith was profound. He was Universalist in his faith, and in every fibre of his soul. He believed that a good and wise God, the Father of all human souls, must in the end bring all things into perfect subjection to his will. The idea of the Divine goodness and that of permanent evil he deemed mutually exclusive. The letter of Scripture he thought

clear and explicit to that effect. Sovereign grace, manifest in the mission of Christ the Redeemer, must at last extend as far as the reign of sin, and God be all in all in the complete salvation of the now sinful world. And he deemed the truth of inestimable value as a saving grace. Only love can save. That is a truth for earth not less than for worlds beyond. No attestation of that love can justify belief which does not include the redeeming plan. In the pulpit, in his school, in his parting word to the graduating class, he did not fail to give thanks and to exalt God, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." I do not think that, as a preacher or a teacher, he was particularly controversial; but he never failed firmly and confidently to assert the doctrine which in early youth was to himself the passage from darkness unto light, — the doctrine of God's sovereign grace, attested at last in the great and all-inclusive salvation from sin and woe.

As I bring to a conclusion this Memoir, the feeling comes on me that I have been in communion with an exalted character. I have, candidly I trust, conceded minor defects in the mentality and the conduct of the man. But, in the contrast with his firm sincerity, his pure intent, his consecrated endeavors, his adhesion to honest conviction, his loyalty to duty, I can, in the full approbation of conscience, pronounce Ebenezer Fisher one of the few who rise to the measure of greatness. He has taken his place not alone among the leading and

constructive spirits of the Universalist Church, but of the Church universal. His past is secure. His work was a victory. His hold on the reverent love of those who knew him in life is firm. And other generations shall hear his praises recited, and shall profit by the work he began. The Universalist Church will preserve in pride the name — may it ever emulate the conspicuous virtues — of EBENEZER FISHER.

APPENDIX.

I.

A DEDICATORY ADDRESS.[1]

By Rev. Everett L. Conger.

Fellow-students and Friends. — A sad yet grateful duty calls us to this spot: sad, because it reminds us that one whom we all loved is taken from us; the lips so eloquent to teach are dumb, the mind where great thoughts were born, and so elec-

[1] As noted in Chapter XX., the Alumni of the Canton Theological School, on the day succeeding the funeral services of Dr. Fisher, voted to place a monument over the grave of their beloved teacher. The vote was carried into effect. June 26, 1879, — on occasion of the Commencement exercises of the St. Lawrence University, — the monument was dedicated by appropriate exercises. A plain, perfect shaft of Quincy granite, severely simple, massive, of fine proportions and excellent finish, the monument bears the simple inscription of his name, birth, and death, and the words, "Erected by the Alumni of the Theological School." In the presence of an immense concourse of people, representing every creed, the solemn service was rendered. Dr. O. Cone, of the Monument Committee, presented the monument to the Alumni. The Rev. W. W. Hooper, of Huntington, N. Y., offered prayer. The Rev. E. L. Conger then gave the dedicatory address, — the text of which is herewith given. An original hymn, by Rev. E. W. Preble, of Bangor, Me., was sung by the theological students. A benediction, pronounced by Rev. J. F. Simmons, of Webster, Mass., closed the service.

tric to provoke great thoughts in others, has finished its work: sad, because the lofty soul has left its earthly temple to crumble into sacred dust beneath our feet: grateful, because we esteem it a privilege to honor true worth, and pay this tribute of love to a good man.

The great loss to our whole church, to our school, and to us personally, casts a shadow of sadness to-day; but with it mingles the sunshine of joy, when we come to present this testimonial of our gratitude and love to his memory. With one accord his students have gladly united in erecting this plain and simple, but permanent memorial; and we are now here to dedicate it with fitting service.

First, then, let us dedicate it to the memory of a self-made man. Let it remind us, and all students who come after us, of the divine possibilities in every man of courage, perseverance, and faith. Dr. Fisher made his own beginning and had few of the many helps which we have enjoyed: yet he acquired a discipline of mind, a breadth of culture, and reached an eminence as a scholar and teacher, which the many will admire, but the few only attain. May his example be an inspiration to all who are fighting their own way through difficulties to success!

On one side of this monument we have placed this inscription: "Ebenezer Fisher, D.D., first President of the Theological School of St. Lawrence University." But, as this school was the first of its kind in our Church, it is fitting that we should dedicate this monument to the first President of the first Theological School of the Universalist Church of America.

When, in the progress of our growing denomination, this theological school was established, the question arose: Where shall we find the man qualified to be its President? Dr. Fisher was chosen; and I have yet to learn that the wisdom of that choice, or the fitness of the man, was ever questioned during the twenty years he filled that responsible position. And when we remember that he was hardly known outside of two States,

and that he had had no experience in a school of like character, either as scholar or teacher, to fit him for the work, his remarkable success is still more marvellous, and compels the conviction that there was a wisdom in the choice beyond human knowledge.

It is the evidence of a great teacher that he always keeps the *individual character* of the scholar above the instruction. This was so eminently true of Dr. Fisher, that we ought to build it as one block into this memorial. Being a self-made man, he knew how to respect the manhood in others. He sent out no parrots. He fastened no forms, no mannerisms, no fixed methods upon his scholars. He left the mind unfettered, and the soul free. Every one could think his own thought in his own way, while the feeblest argument was heard with the utmost patience, as if it was the profoundest truth. He thus shamed sophistry and subterfuge, and appealed to the honest, manly, Christian convictions of each.

We who sat as learners at his feet can never forget his efforts to inspire our best thoughts, to strengthen our self-reliance and make us strong, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God and his truth, to do his saving work.

We never felt him as master, save in the natural supremacy of true worth. With his class he too was a pupil of the Great Teacher; and Paul's words to Timothy were his words to us: "Study to show thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He felt the magnitude of the work for which he was fitting us, and saw the far-reaching results of his instruction; and often said to his classes: "Young men, remember the destiny of our church will one day be in your hands: its great truths will be entrusted to you, its policy will be shaped by you, and its responsibilities will fall on your shoulders."

And so we want this stone to tell those who come after that it marks the resting-place of one who worked in the living present, but for the great future. What he did to-day he did

for all time, and he spoke as if his words were going into the eternities. We may well say of him what another said of Bryant: "In all the years of his life, who can recall one line that he ever wrote which was not honest and pure, one measure that he defended except from the profoundest convictions of right, one cause that he advocated which any friend of liberty, of humanity, of good government, would deplore?"

We are proud to dedicate this monument to one of whom such words are true. It will indeed add nothing to his name; but it gives us pleasure thus to do him honor, and it may guide the grateful in the future to emulate his example.

But the best monument we can build to his memory is a life consecrated to the same noble purposes revealed in his. Let us, therefore, put a seal of sacredness on this service by dedicating ourselves to the truth he loved, to the church of his choice, to the cause he served, to the Master whom he followed, and to the God and Father whom he trusted as a child.

Then this monument will not have been builded in vain; and the work of God and man so faithfully wrought by him will go on in us, towards the fulfilment of the eternal purpose, —

> "The one far-off divine event,
> Towards which the whole creation moves,"

when sin is finished, man becomes divinely man, and God shall be all in all.

II.

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS.[1]

By Rev. James M. Pullman, D.D.

Brethren, — In appearing before you to attempt a task to which your too partial kindness has considered me not inadequate, I must confess that I find myself in the outset a prey to emotions which I can neither completely analyze nor wholly control. I thought I had fortified myself against any undue access of feeling at this trying hour ; but when I look over this great audience, and turn to the familiar and honored faces on this platform, and miss from among them the most familiar and honored face of all, I cannot dismiss from my heart the feel-

[1] As noted in Chapter XX., the Alumni of the Canton Theological School determined to make the Annual Commencement exercises of 1879 the occasion of Memorial Services in honor of President Fisher. The services were held in Canton, June 26, 1879. The Rev. Almon Gunnison presided. With him on the platform were the trustees, professors, clergy, students, and the graduates under whose auspices the services were held. In front of the pulpit, the students had placed a life-size crayon portrait of Dr. Fisher, its frame skilfully wreathed with white roses. Prayer was offered by Rev. A. B. Hervey. A solo was sung by Miss Hewitt. The Rev. James M. Pullman, D.D., of New York, then delivered the Memorial Address, — herewith given. Representatives of every choir in the town then sung a Memorial Hymn, written by Rev. E. L. Rexford, D.D. The services closed with a Benediction, pronounced by the Rev. A. U. Hutchins, of Middleport, N. Y.

ing of desolation which follows a personal bereavement. This is the first Commencement since this College was founded, at which Ebenezer Fisher has not been the central and beloved figure ; and when, on former occasions, it has been my pleasant duty to address Commencement audiences here, he has always filled his accustomed chair, and I have cared more (you must pardon me for saying so) for his grave and quiet approval than for any other approbation I might win ; and now that the desolating certainty is borne in upon me that amidst these familiar scenes I shall see his form and hear his voice no more, this place, full as it is to-day, seems almost empty and abandoned.

I know that this is not a funeral occasion. The funeral rites, testifying to a sorrow as deep and fervent as ever followed the exit of mortal man from this stage of being, are done and ended. The duty of this hour is to attempt some genuine and discriminating appreciation of the more salient features of his character and work. And, in attempting this, I must not forget that what is due to this departed teacher from one of his earliest pupils is modesty of praise. Whatever early association, deep affection, and profound respect, might dictate, I must not offend the simple dignity and purity of his character by terms of too ardent eulogy.

Neither am I to sketch the history of his whole career. His biographer, — able, accomplished, and in every way competent, — has been already chosen ; and it will be his grateful task to trace, amid the scenes and incidents of youth and early life, the development of those forces which made up the matured and solid manhood that we knew and honored.

Our special interest in Ebenezer Fisher begins with the time when, twenty-one years ago, he commenced his work here, as the first president of our first theological foundation. The spectacle before us is that of a strong and capacious soul devoting itself to a lofty purpose. The work before him was that of a teacher of teachers ; he was to form, inspire, and

guide our future Christian apologists, administrators, homilists, and pastors. Under the most favorable circumstances, this is a sufficiently responsible and oppressive task. Even when aided by all the machinery of a great school, the *prestige* of a venerable foundation, the security of ample endowments, the helps of a sufficient library, a well-trained corps of adjunct professors, a copious dogmatic, and homiletic literature, an established system and approved text-books, — even then his work would have presented the intrinsic difficulties which belong to the establishment of a new school of systematic theology. But these helps are precisely what Dr. Fisher did not have ; and, indeed, his whole environment was unique and unprecedented.

Of the three circles of special circumstance which surrounded him, the outermost was : —

1. *The changed and changing conditions of religious thought.*

A lusty and aggressive scientific materialism, daily supplied with fresh resources, was commencing a new attack upon the very citadel of revealed religion, supernaturalism, which found but a feeble and timid defender in that religious sentimentalism which, while calling itself orthodox and evangelical, had largely lost its hold upon the intellect of its adherents, and detained them mainly by association and by sentiment. Rationalism had found a new ally in the much-vaunted spirit of toleration, created partly by breadth of view and depth of charity, and partly by the indifference and hopelessness of utter unbelief.

The new scepticism, less scoffing and malignant than the old, was far more severe, persistent, and despondent, — gravitating surely, if slowly, toward that certain gulf of abnormally developed critical faculty, pessimism.

The old nihilism, through which we were to "learn to have no opinion at all on subjects of the deepest interest," had been rechristened, and was appearing under its new titles as nescience and agnosticism, and found adherents ready to dignify and almost deify an assumed and necessitated ignorance. Ef-

fects do not imply causes ; morality has no higher sanction than utility ; instincts are only the capitalized experiences of the race ; God is the Unknowable, and the Christ of the Gospels is the incredible, — these and many more catch-words of an age of most alert, active, and unsettled intellect, were in the air when Dr. Fisher assumed the task of instructing a school of Christian teachers in a new and larger interpretation of Christianity, by which to grapple with the problems of thought and life.

2. Then, in the narrower circle of his environment, *the condition of the Universalist Church* was in some respects anomalous, transitional, and indeterminate. The Universalist body was developing into a Church ; it had arrived at its era of self-consciousness; it was seeking to define its boundaries and determine the direction of its activities. A strong tendency toward a vital and organic church-life was developing out of its earlier and sturdy individualism, and manifesting itself in a new spirit of organization and education. Yet whether the Universalist body was to only accomplish a specific doctrinal reform, and then be reabsorbed by the orthodox mass, or whether there was enough vitality in its central idea to give it a separate and distinctive existence, based on its power of moral control, — this was the problem which the teachers of the body were to face. Certainly — and necessarily, heretofore — the church had been more aggressive toward false doctrine than toward sin ; more eager to change men's opinions than their conduct. Whether Universalism should take final form as a means of special and chiefly intellectual culture, for the few, or become light, inspiration, and renewal, to the many, would, humanly speaking, depend largely on the training of its ministry. So believed the earnest souls whose devoted and persistent labors founded this school.

3. Then, in the immediate circle of his personal activity, *the condition of the school itself* opposed to Dr. Fisher's resolute will difficulties which to many others would have seemed insupera-

ble. The isolation of its location, the meagerness of its endowment, the poverty of its equipment, the utter lack of special text-books and literary helps ; the small number and imperfect mental discipline of the pupils who presented themselves ; and his own lack of precedent or experience for the work he had undertaken, — these were some of the difficulties amidst which he faced his first class in the bare and resounding rooms of the new university building.

It is evident that under such conditions the whole experiment depended on the man. And it is here that Dr. Fisher's commanding personality appears. Had Providence sent us any thing less, — a scholar only, however profound ; an administrator only, however able, — we should not have had success. But in Ebenezer Fisher we found at once a man to be believed in, whatever else we believed or disbelieved. It has been said that he created this school. There is an eminent and distinct sense in which he did so ; but this is not the place or time to underestimate the faithful helpers by whom his hands were upheld and strengthened. I see upon this platform members both of the faculty and corporation, without whose wise counsel and strenuous personal effort the burden could not have been carried.

Nor did the school lack friends abroad, whose timely and generous aid tided it over many shoals, and to whom Dr. Fisher himself would be prompt to gratefully ascribe much of the success which attended his labors. But I think there must have been many times during that first uncertain year, when his heart sunk within him at the dubious prospect. If he had such fears, however, he kept them to himself. Calm, wise, patient, untiring, persistent, he worked his way, foot by foot, meeting all obstacles with ready resource and indomitable will.

In April, 1858, this chief labor of his life began, amid so many and so great discouragements, to which was added on his part a profound self-distrust. But when, twenty-one years later, he laid down his work and his life together, he had be-

come, as was said of another great teacher, "a giant, with an hundred athletes in his train."

I have sketched thus roughly the chief circumstances which bore upon his work here, because, without some knowledge of his environment, we cannot rightly estimate the man.

Let us look now at some of the settled convictions with which he met the forces antagonistic to Christianity in the larger aspects of religious thought.

1. Rationalism. To the narrow rationalism of the intellect, whose instrument is school-logic, he opposed the broad rationality of man's co-ordinate faculties. All the faculties of man, their separate and different deliverances taken together and blending together, made up, in his view, the rational nature of man. Intuition is as rational as induction : the emotions are as logical as the understanding. He would never concede that making the understanding the sole avenue of truth, and the logical process the sole criterion of truth, was a rational procedure ; and he taught us that a truth might be opaque to the understanding, but luminous to the affections, and so authentic. To him, a supernatural, or at least a supermundane direction and control of human affairs, and a special revelation of the Divine will, were in the highest degree rational, and the attempt to set them aside by either logic or science was in the highest degree irrational. He was merciless toward that form of rationalism whose only point is uncertainty, which calls for a "suspense of faith," and whose disciples somebody has compared to steamers in a fog, blowing their whistles to say : "Here *we* are, and that's all we know."

As to the scientific materialism, his main position was that incomparably the most significant phenomenon in life is the living will of man ; and this is precisely the phenomenon of which scientific materialism takes the least account. Hence the sphere and authority of the scientific method is strictly limited, and does not trench upon the domain of theology, whose factors are the Living Will of God and the living will

of man. In regard to the various hypotheses of evolution, he held the substance of Martineau's dictum, that "nothing can be *e*volved that is not first *in*volved;" that God made the atom, not the atom God; that the soul organizes the body, not the body the soul. And man has that in him which will for ever elude scientific analysis. While he was very far from being of that timid crew who, as another has said, are eager to "surrender to the first man with a hammer or a microscope who challenges their faith," he was nevertheless hospitable to scientific thought and theory; and he expected to find in science, when it should have outgrown the stage of wild and unverifiable hypothesis, a valuable ally for religion.

Rising from a scientific study of the atoms and forces of the physical world, he breaks forth thus: "Restless, sleepless world! Balanced in impalpable ether, and hastening on an endless errand; with every atom perpetually jostled and momentarily counterpoised; with every particle hurrying to an appointed task, pursued by an inevitable law! How vain the thought to pillow ourselves upon *it*, and find motionless rest! Even the particles of our own bodies come and go, swift as the rapid shuttles fly in the ever-weaving web of life. Above us, beneath us, around us, *through us*, sweeps the ceaseless current of the shoreless river. From what fountain did it issue; to what ocean does it tend? 'For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope.'

"To interpret in sadness these lessons of sleepless nature is to miss utterly their meaning. Behold, then, in this thronging concourse, the flowing currents of life. Its laws, decreed by Infinite Goodness, control the great globe and every atom in it. The law of life is a law of continued action, and to it all things are obedient. There is something always doing; there is something still to do. There is no point where the way is stopped; no place where it turns back on itself to reverse its course. Its way is appointed, its path is open, its command

is 'onward.' Every world and every atom glorifies Him who made it, by the alacrity of its ceaseless activity. Nor is there in their perpetual service any perceived necessity for an end.

"What an argument is here for our continued being! For as, according to their kind, the paths of all entities in nature are ever open before them; so we can do no less than believe that, according to its kind, the path of the living soul shall, before it, be for ever open, — *aye, before it!* for there is not an atom in nature which so misses its way as to be compelled to retrace its steps in the face of life's streaming current. Shall we believe that God's chiefest work is alone lost and bewildered, alone disordered and confused? Where all things else know their path, shall *it* be compelled for ever to linger in hopeless sadness over its first few steps? for ever to retrace a lost way? for ever to stand with its back toward its true path and its face toward its first fatal missteps, wringing its hands in helpless, aimless anguish? Nature's voice proclaims such an idea an anomaly, and on every highway through which moves the living hosts of the universe her hand posts it as a vicious libel."

Dr. Fisher's mind was fully alive to the uses and value of the destructive criticism, both rational and scientific; but his comprehensive grasp of great questions saved him from an inglorious surrender or an ignoble compromise before the citadels of his faith were really menaced. He was fond of giving destructive criticism its full play in the discussion of a vital question, stating all its points with the utmost force and fairness, and then, when it seemed to our inexperienced minds that all was lost, turning upon them the resistless batteries of defence and repulse, and re-establishing the positions of the truth more impregnable than before. It was the comprehensiveness of his mind which gave him that serenity and composure of conviction which so impressed his pupils. No one ever saw him alarmed or disturbed at the most novel and

trenchant assaults of scepticism. In his broad view, Christianity was so absolutely *reasonable* that it could never be in real danger except through the cowardice or incompetency of its defenders. Thus he always felt and manifested a complete imperturbability of conviction and a massive repose of faith.

Of another great teacher it was smartly but disingenuously said that "he awoke every morning with the impression that every thing was an open question." In a nature at once liberal and shallow, the eager and hospitable reception of new forms of untried truth often produces such a result; but such was the depth and force of Dr. Fisher's intellect that, instead of losing, he seemed to gain stability of conviction with every conflict. He used often to tell us that his early morning hours were his golden hours for clear thinking; and when he came into class fresh from that morning bath of luminous meditation, the most thoughtless and least reverential of us felt the spell of his intellectual and spiritual mastery. And with all his stability of conviction, there was a conspicuous absence of narrowness and bigotry. It was from him and *in* him that I first learned to surely know what I had before greatly doubted, — that mighty convictions and fervent faith could coexist with the broadest and most catholic intellect. It is a common effect of culture to lessen conviction, as of intense conviction to lessen charity; but in his well-endowed nature the breadth of his knowledge only deepened his faith, and the fervency of his faith only broadened his charity. On the value of such a character impressed upon the future apologists and homilists of our church, I need not here enlarge.

Looking back now at the general course of Dr. Fisher's teaching and influence, certain definite convictions with regard to the genius of Universalism seem to me to underlie and give distinctive character to his whole work. I can only hint at the more salient points, and that in merest outline.

1. Universalism is in no sense an abandonment, nor in any

degree a modification, of Christianity. It is a radical and genetic restatement of Christian doctrine.

2. Universalism is not, therefore, as it becomes formulated into system, to develop a science of hermeneutics under the operation of which the great specialties of the Christian revelation are to be reduced to the desert-level of rationalism ; but it is to build up a characteristic exegesis, in which the essential and permanent truths of the Gospel shall be liberated and sharply distinguished from the accidental and temporary forms.

3. Jesus Christ is not the official bearer of a mysterious and indefinable offer of exceptional and undeserved security to the few ; but the Divine and intelligible teacher of self-evidencing and demonstrable spiritual truth to the many.

4. Christianity is not, therefore, a weak proffer of the final alternatives, — heaven, hell, — but a re-announcement of the eternal moral order of the universe, showing that invincible necessity of personal righteousness which issues from the inexorable fidelity of God's love.

It was settled with him, and formed distinctive features of his teaching : —

1. That the Universalist body was not to assume the Christian *name* while rejecting the Christian *facts ;* but that it was to develop a Christian church, firmly based upon its enlightened interpretation of the Christian facts, and following implicitly the leadership of Christ.

In 1870 he wrote as follows : " It [the Gospel] is neither exhausted nor superseded, but retains in this nineteenth century its transforming, organizing, conquering, exultant power. Those who believe it, though they be divided into corps, divisions, regiments, and companies, are yet an army, with one common watchword, one clear, intelligent aim, and a well-defined theory of life, hope, and duty. While those who in Christian lands reject it are a disorganized drift of discordant elements, whose only unity is in their disbeliefs and scornings of the book and its gospel ; with no practical theory of life,

work, or hope, stumbling over the problems of the philosophy of thirty centuries ago, and, as a body, able to stand or cohere only as they can lean heavily against the imperishable walls of the Word inspired and revealed by the Redeemer of the world.

"Man will have a leader. No great positive work, of the common mind and strength, has ever been successfully or long sustained without. . . . Look, then, at the situation and prospects of those who reject the historic Christ. They proclaim him 'dead,' and every week their work is to bury him. Their creed and ritual is but the service of a prolonged and ever-renewed funeral. They can no more fill and close that open grave than could the daughters of Danaus fill the penal sieves with water. They are laboring to bury what is not dead, and cannot accomplish their purpose. But, were it accomplished, what then would remain for them to do but to look wistfully into each other's faces, and then go, every man to his own house?"

2. He believed that the mission of the Universalist Church was larger than that of intellectual criticism or culture, and deeper and more enduring than that of doctrinal reform. That the church should become a mighty regenerating force, a "power of God unto salvation," exalting, inspiring, and controlling the character and conduct of mankind, was at once his conviction and his inspiration. He deplored the tendency of a sentimental orthodoxy and an equally sentimental liberalism to obliterate or modify the distinction between good and evil. He believed not only that that tendency did not inhere in Universalism, but that Universalism would be corrective of it. And he lost no opportunity to caution us against contentment with a merely theoretical position or a negative basis. "What penalties," he asks, "must fall on the denomination which, through false humility or religious mawkishness, practically plants itself on such a position? The penalty of inconclusiveness as to the practical finishing of her faith; to be ever establishing premises, but failing of conclusions; to be always heaping up materials,

but never building the house ; perpetually to spell the syllables, but never to pronounce the word ; to find often her sons and daughters brought to the doorway of the Christian Church, yet not daring to enter ; their thoughts discovering, in some of the highest doctrines and institutions of Christianity only duties which they dare not assume to perform, or privileges which it would be presumptuous in them to claim ; to have them remain friends or servants of the Christian household, but not sons and daughters of the family."

3. It was his conviction that the immutable foundation of Universalism was in the ethical perfection of God. This is the central doctrine of the church. He rejected utterly the notion of an antagonism between God's attributes. Justice and mercy are but *modes* of the Divine love ; and the welfare of man finds its only possible security in the perfection of the Divine character.

"What," he exclaims, "shall be said of him who, by making God's justice unjust, and his mercy unmerciful, falsifies the standards of the universe, and changes the centre of the beam on which all things are weighed. But he does this who asserts that God has made his highest work in such a manner that it proves a stumbling of Almighty Power, which, should it fall, crushes the universe in ruins ; and a faltering of Infinite Wisdom, whose perplexity would bewilder every orb in its sphere, and quench the light of every intellect that catches its rays from him. He does this who, proclaiming the endless anguish of human souls, makes the Infinite Wisdom to plan, and Almighty Power to build, that which when completed is only a *colossal ruin*."

Instead of *that*, this : "Paul, from his mount of vision, looks backward to Abraham, to Adam, to the foundation of the world, and sees afar off, like the river-head in the mountains, the source, and traces the primal courses of God's eternal purpose. Down to his own time he pursues it, and sees how those purposes flow in full volume about himself and those around

him ; he turns then toward the future, and looks forward with the same great thought (who can deny it ?) and sees the whole creation of man coming into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

I give these as samples only of the definite and characteristic convictions which were the basis of his teaching. There was nothing loose, formless, or erratic in his mental constitution ; hence, nothing uncertain or indefinite in his instruction. His influence on the developing life of our church, through seven school generations of young ministers, can hardly be overestimated. He did, certainly, largely and beneficently mould our church life ; and his steady hand upon the helm steered many an ardent but wavering mind "past the rocks" of scientific and rationalistic scepticism, and steadied its voyage for life across the open sea of Christian truth.

I recall some characteristics of his special instruction to us as preachers.

1. Never did he fail to detect and discourage every attempt at "fine writing," and every disposition to cultivate a style that would attract admiration to the speaker rather than attention to his message. Keen as was his desire to make us effective preachers of the Word, and appreciative as he was of every felicity of utterance, I doubt if the fashionable phrase, "a brilliant preacher," was ever on his lips. How merciless he could be in the "dissecting-room," where sermons were read for criticism ! How ruthlessly would he slaughter our ambitious and redundant sentences, our tropical rhetoric, our "white bears !" Yet his own fancy was exuberant when he gave it the rein, his own style often strikingly picturesque and illustrative ; and he encouraged those qualities in us, when subordinated to and assisting the purpose of our thought. An affected, formal, and didactic manner was his special aversion ; perspicuity and force his ideal excellencies. He said : "It is in the power of but few to attain that degree of eloquence which has such entrancing potency as 'the applause of listening senates to com-

mand,' but almost any man who has any call to the ministry may become master of a clear and compact expression, simple and cogent, which, with sincerity and a 'meek, unaffected grace,' may give him a powerful hold, not only on the hearts, but on the intellects of his hearers. They might not worship him, — no good man would desire any thing approaching it, — but he would have all the essentials of a healthy and lasting usefulness, and power to be indeed a worthy minister of Him 'who went about doing good.'"

2. The urgency with which he always insisted that we should preach our convictions and not our doubts recalls a recent timely word to the same purport: "If any man is tired, let him lie down; if any is faint-hearted, let him turn back from the battle; if any is too blind to see the divine glory, let him not employ his no-vision to guide mankind into the ditch. The blowing of the east wind is more welcome and helpful than the prophesying of one who mistakes his own collapsing purpose for evidence that the Holy Ghost also is a spent force, or that the ever-living Word is an outworn fable."

3. With an affectionate and solemn urgency, he would constantly remind us that we were to preach Christ, — not about Christ; that we were to announce Christianity as a message, not to discuss it as a problem; that we were not the special pleaders for a system, but witnesses to the truth; that the dissection however complete, and the analysis however subtle, of trivial topics, was a frittering away of powers and time that ought to be more nobly employed in the "large utterance of great truths, and the great enforcement of great duties." In proportion, he would say, as men lose faith in the great central truths of Christianity, is their tendency to preach side issues, and refine upon little matters, — a tendency sometimes strongly marked in what are called "liberal" preachers.

To preach to conscience, as the one faculty that will always respond, even when belief is paralyzed and faith is dormant; to preach to individuals and not to masses, since salvation is

a personal and not a social matter, and is effected by bringing the soul into direct relations with its Maker, "it alone with Him alone;" and to preach in love, — adopting the maxim of the Abbé Mullois, that "to address men well they must be loved much," — these are some of the points which he would repeatedly enforce, and which, with grave solicitude and tender earnestness, he sought to incorporate with the very substance of our souls.

I recall some of the personal traits which made his unconscious influence often stronger and deeper on his pupils than his deliberate and intended effects.

Yet, in stating these personal traits, I do not mean that I am making any adequate analysis of the man. The sources of Dr. Fisher's power were deep and manifold. His strength lay not in one thing, but in many. No analysis will detect the central secret of his character. Like a deep, broad and stately river, many mingled affluents made up its volume and its power.

But we all felt his *genuineness*. And no position more tests this than that of a teacher in daily and intimate contact with his pupils. No mask can long evade their prying eyes. Any assumption is sure to be detected ; any weakness, vanity, pretence, is sure to be found out. Dr. Fisher wore no mask, and needed none. There was nothing to conceal. The simplicity, transparency, reality, and genuineness of his nature, were of themselves irresistibly attractive.

He was a good hater of things mean and hateful. His large capacity for indignation toward wrong-doing was all the more effective, because — too deep and intense to break out in gusts of passion — it always manifested itself in a "steady love of good, and a steady scorn of evil."

Along with his masculine sense, there went a certain curious unworldliness. Careful and even shrewd in all his dealings, his very shrewdness seemed to be purely a matter of duty ; and his unaffected contempt for tricks of policy and mere

worldly advantage was so constant and undisguised that, whenever such notions were hatched in our more worldly heads, we learned not to submit them to him.

He had no regard for mere cleverness or "smartness" in his pupils, and many a snub did our vanity receive from his humorous assumption of an incapacity to understand remarks addressed to him in that vein. How well I remember the twinkle in his deep blue eyes, when he had reduced one of us to the ignominious necessity of *explaining* a pert allusion or a fancied witticism. Yet he loved the play of genuine wit and humor; and some of you will recall the surprise and delight with which we listened to a literary lecture from him, which first showed us on how light a foot his exuberant fancy could range, when untrammelled by the more serious responsibilities of his position.

The simplicity and reality of his religious feeling showed itself in a special abhorrence of cant. The more earnest he grew in his addresses to us on the themes of personal and vital religion, the more natural and unconventional his phraseology became, — simple, pointed, clear, direct, childlike, flowed the steady stream of searching and inspiring talk.

Medical students are apt to lose, in the dissecting-room, their reverence for the human body as the temple of the soul; and theological students, in their class discussions of God as the central factor in a scheme of theology, are in danger of losing their reverence for his living Personality and Nature. This tendency Dr. Fisher effectually counteracted by the unaffected seriousness and reverence with which he always approached the discussion of the Divine attributes, — mingling with his logical and acute analysis a sentiment of awe and devotion.

And if some of us, in our rawness and immaturity, were indeed at times inclined to think that he had too much reverence for a "gray-headed truth" simply because it *was* gray-headed, and for time-honored doctrines which we thought were rather time-*dis*honored, it is nevertheless certain that he did perma-

nently impart to us a profound veneration for the eternal truths upon which his own faith was so grandly builded, and for those divine sanctions by the force of which he bore, —

> "through all this tract of years,
> The white flower of a blameless life."

And who of us will ever forget how his prayers, beginning with subdued and rapid utterance, grew gradually in depth, fervor, force, and solemnity, until they made the unseen world seem the only reality, and this life a mask of painted shadows!

Remember, too, how he sometimes rose in the conference-meeting, with a manner and utterance full of tenderness, gentleness, and sweet humility, rising as he went on to force, condensed, controlled, and pervaded with such wondrous elevation and purity of tone, that his words were like cut crystals, full of light and fire. No man ever lived who more truly and constantly realized that "underneath are the everlasting arms;" and, in an age in which enlightened selfishness often usurps the name of virtue, it is something to have felt the impress of a man who believed with all his heart in purity, goodness, and righteousness, for themselves alone.

Here let us pause, while tender and sacred memories of our teacher, guide, and friend are busy in all our hearts. His contribution to his age and his church is not written in volumes of learning and deep discourse; but to us, his pupils, his record is, with Paul: "Ye are our epistle . . . written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart." May we for ever bear his power and purpose on loyal breasts! Suddenly, in an hour that we thought not of, — my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof? — he was taken away out of our sight. Upon all who take up his work may a double portion of his spirit be.

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